

News release

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50 organisations call for real Warm Homes Bill

A group of 50 civil society and business organisations says the Scottish Government is in danger of failing to deliver a real Warm Homes Bill for Scotland.

Today (Tue 29 May) they issued a joint statement calling on ministers and MSPs to create a law that will end fuel poverty, create new jobs and investment, and tackle climate change.

The Warm Homes Bill was promised in the SNP manifesto for the last Holyrood elections, and has broad cross-party support. But at the moment, ministers have only committed to bringing in a Fuel Poverty Bill.

The group - led by the Existing Homes Alliance - says that bill is too narrowly focused and fear that the Government will miss a 'once in a generation' opportunity to end the scandal of Scotland's cold, damp homes.

Alliance chair Lori McElroy said: "More than a quarter of Scottish households are still living in fuel poverty – the same proportion who faced cold homes a decade ago – and over a million homes fall below the energy efficiency standard needed for our health. All political parties agree this is unacceptable in a modern, wealthy country. The promised Warm Homes Bill represented a once in a generation opportunity for change.

"But the Scottish Government is in danger of failing to grasp that opportunity. The proposed Fuel Poverty Bill is far too narrow, focused just on creating a new definition of fuel poverty and setting new fuel poverty targets. This is incredibly important, but we can do so much more. So today we are calling on the Scottish Government and all MSPs to ensure that Scotland gets the Warm Homes Bill it was promised and that it deserves."

The 50 groups who signed the joint statement include Unite and Unison, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the Royal College of Nursing, Scottish Directors of Public Health, Shelter, the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, the Association of Local Authority Chief Housing Officers, WWF Scotland, Friends of the Earth Scotland, and business organisations, including the Federation of Master Builders and the National Insulation Association. It also includes Age Scotland, the British Lung Foundation Scotland, the Poverty Alliance, Citizens Advice Scotland, and energy groups such as Energy Action Scotland and the Energy Savings Trust.

Lori McElroy said: "It is not often that such a wide range of voices from across Scotland come together in such a powerful way. There is a broad, growing consensus across

society, business, and among politicians that we need to take real action on fuel poverty and energy efficiency.

"Bringing Scotland's homes up to a standard of energy efficiency will tackle fuel poverty and climate change, reduce ill-health, improve well-being, reduce inequalities, and create and sustain jobs across Scotland. It is quite simply one of the best investments that the Scottish Government could make.

"The Warm Homes Bill should provide a strong legal foundation not just for the new Fuel Poverty Strategy, but also for the Government's new Energy Efficient Scotland programme. It should include long-term targets for energy performance with clear time-scales - giving industry, home-owners and landlords the certainty to invest. It should remove barriers and create incentives for installing energy efficiency and low-carbon heat in homes, realising their full potential.

"It should set robust quality standards and consumer protection measures. And it should ensure that everyone can benefit from affordable heat and energy in all parts of Scotland, regardless of geography, tenancy, housing type, or income.

"We urge the Scottish Government and politicians of all parties to seize this opportunity."

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For more information or to arrange an interview call David Eyre on 07960 451631 / david@davideyre.co.uk

Notes to editors

- The Existing Homes Alliance Scotland is a coalition calling for urgent action to transform Scotland's existing housing stock and make it fit for the 21st century, bringing together climate campaigners, housing providers, fuel poverty campaigners, and business. For more information visit our website at: <http://existinghomesalliancescotland.co.uk/>
- A copy of the joint statement – including a full list of the 50 organisations who have signed it – can be downloaded from here: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/407tnk7dana62zk/eha%204pp%20may%2018%20v%208%2072dpi.pdf?dl=0>.
- In 2016, 649,000 households (26.5% of the total) were in fuel poverty. (Source: The Scottish House Condition Survey 2016, December 2017)
- The latest figures from the National Registers of Scotland showed that 2,720 more people died in winter 2016/17 compared with warmer months. Research by the World Health Organisation suggests that around 30% of those deaths could have been avoided if everyone in Scotland lived in a home that was adequately insulated and heated.
- If the Scottish Government brought all homes up to EPC band C by 2025, research suggests that will support 6,400 jobs throughout Scotland. It will give a much-needed boost to the Scottish economy, raising Gross Value Added by 0.27% on an annual basis.

- We can cut people's fuel bills through greater energy efficiency - by around £245 a year for fuel poor homes, if they are brought up to EPC band C by 2025. That will help reduce our gas imports by around 26%, increasing our energy security and decreasing our reliance on fossil fuels.
- All of this is designed to end fuel poverty in Scotland - a goal that will have massive benefits for people's health, especially those with respiratory conditions. Research says that bringing all homes up to EPC band C by 2025 could save NHS Scotland somewhere between £31-52 million.
- For more information, see the ExHA Warm Homes Bill briefings here:
<http://existinghomesalliancescotland.co.uk/policy/a-warm-homes-bill-for-scotland/>