

Immediate news release – 27 June 2018

Alliance calls for Fuel Poverty Bill that will achieve warm homes for all

The Existing Homes Alliance welcomes the publication of the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Strategy and Definition) (Scotland) Bill today, but says the bill is too narrowly focused and fear that the Scottish Parliament could miss a 'once in a generation' opportunity to end the scandal of Scotland's cold, damp homes unless amendments are made.

Last month a group of 50 civil society and business organisations launched a joint statement calling for a real Warm Homes Bill that would deliver affordable to heat, low carbon homes for everyone in Scotland. Such legislation would help end fuel poverty, create new jobs and investment, and tackle climate change.

A Warm Homes Bill tackling both fuel poverty and energy efficiency was promised in the SNP manifesto for the last Holyrood elections, and has broad cross-party support. Instead, the Scottish Government has introduced a Fuel Poverty Bill.

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."

"While legislation on fuel poverty is very welcome, this 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. We urge all MSPs to use the scrutiny process to ensure this legislation is strengthened so it can deliver on the promise of warm homes for all.

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 Alliance believes this legislation 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:

- A time-bound target to *eradicate* fuel poverty, instead of the bill's target to reduce fuel poverty to 5% by 2040.
- A target to end poor energy performance as a driver for fuel poverty.

- Long-term targets for energy performance with clear time-scales - giving industry, home-owners and landlords the certainty to invest.
- Remove barriers and create incentives for installing energy efficiency and low-carbon heat in homes, realising their full potential.
- Set robust quality standards and consumer protection measures.

This bill should ensure that everyone can benefit from affordable heat and energy in all parts of Scotland, regardless of geography, tenancy, housing type, or income. The Alliance urges politicians of all parties to seize this opportunity.

ENDS

**For more information or to arrange an interview call Elizabeth Leighton
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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/>
- The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Strategy and Definition) (Scotland) Bill was introduced by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance MSP, on 26 June 2018 and published today. <http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/Bills/108916.aspx> and the Scottish Government press release <https://news.gov.scot/news/target-to-cut-fuel-poverty>
- The joint statement on a Warm Homes Bill – including a full list of the 50 organisations who have signed it – can be downloaded from here: <http://existinghomesalliancescotland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Warm-Homes-Bill-Joint-Statement-May-18.pdf>
- 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 Scotland, 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.
- 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.

- 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 Alliance Warm Homes Bill briefings here: <http://existinghomesalliancescotland.co.uk/policy/a-warm-homes-bill-for-scotland/>