

Minutes of Meeting on Tuesday 22 March 2023

Venue: 5, Atlantic Quay, Glasgow,

Time: 09:00- 17:00

Type: in-person

ATTENDEES:

Panel: Matthew Cole (Chair), Margaret Corrigan, Kirsten Jenkins, Alister Steele, Fraser Stewart

Secretariat: Philippa Brosnan, Fran Eatwell-Thomas & Patricia Melvin

AGENDA ITEM 1: Welcome

Matthew Cole welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Fran Eatwell-Roberts, will shortly be joining the Secretariat. Matthew noted the busy agenda, including inputs from Scottish Government officials from DECC – Onshore, Electricity, Strategy & Consents and Heat in Buildings – as well as Consumer Scotland and an independent energy consultant, Simon Gill. Also noted, was the focus the meeting will have on the Scottish Government Fuel Poverty Strategy. He then invited comments on the minutes from the Panel's meeting on the 17th of January: the Panel confirmed that they were happy to sign these off.

AGENDA ITEM 2: Routine papers & updates

The Panel reviewed the dashboard and the actions from previous meetings.

AGENDA ITEM 3: Fuel Poverty Strategy review

Following on from their previous discussion, the Panel considered the latest draft of their reflections on the Strategy. The Panel made various suggestions about the structure and content and agreed to bring their deliberations on the Strategy to a conclusion at the next meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 4 & 5: Panel's view of the Draft Energy Strategy & Just Transition Plan (ESJTP)

Before Scottish Government officials joined, the Panel briefly discussed the ESJTP acknowledging its wide scope and the critical role it has to play in the delivery of the fuel poverty targets. Officials from DECC – Onshore, Electricity, Strategy & Consents, then joined to present on the ESJTP which is currently in its consultation phase (this closes on the 9th of May). The ESJTP vision for 2045 to have a climate-friendly energy system delivering affordable & resilient energy supplies (domestic & business) for Scotland will be achieved through scaling up renewable production, changing energy usage to renewables from fossil fuels, securing increased investment in net zero and delivering a

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fairer and more secure energy system. In feeding back on the draft ESJTP, the Panel made the following observations:

- the advice & advocacy sector has a key role to play. The Local Authority role (Local Heat & Energy Efficiency Strategies & plans) will be much harder to deliver without a good national spread of robust advocacy support (the Panel made recommendations on advice and advocacy services in their [initial advice](#) to Ministers in October 2022).
- the statutory fuel poverty targets should feature in the route maps included in the ESJTP
- there could be stronger alignment between the ESJTP and the requirements for the UK Government to support it
- there should be close collaboration between officials working on the ESJTP, as the draft evolves and officials working on refreshing the Fuel Poverty Strategy.

AGENDA ITEM 6: The successor to the Warmer Homes' Fund – update on Warmer Homes' Fund criteria

Scottish Government officials from Heat in Buildings presented a follow up on their thinking about the updated criteria for the [Warmer Homes' Fund](#) (they previously attended the Panel on 28th November 2022). The Panel were pleased to note that the Scottish Government has responded to the Panel's feedback in November. For example, extending the range of passport benefits and committing to explore further changes to the referral process, during the lifetime of the scheme - such as a trusted third-party referral option, which will test enabling those who are in fuel poverty, but not eligible for the passport benefits, to access the fund.

AGENDA ITEM 7: Consumer Scotland – reflections on the Fuel Poverty Strategy

Consumer Scotland, following up on their previous engagement with the Panel (in October 2022), came to discuss their thinking on priority areas for the Scottish Government in refreshing the Fuel Poverty Strategy. As time for this agenda item was very tight, Matthew Cole invited Consumer Scotland to come along to the next Panel meeting on 25th of April to enable a longer conversation.

AGENDA ITEM 8: REMA – a Scottish perspective

An independent energy consultant, Simon Gill, came to the Panel to talk to his work, which he's doing, in conjunction with The Scottish Futures Trust, on the Review of electricity markets arrangements (REMA – being run by the UK Department of Energy and Net Zero) and what it means for Scotland. Even though the review is of wholesale market arrangements, it has huge implications for the retail market too and Simon was keen to hear about consumer views and those who represent them.

AGENDA ITEM 9: Website overview

The Secretariat presented on the approach to the website development and hosting procurement, and their engagement with the Panel on this. The Gate Worldwide (website

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developer) then gave a short overview of the website. The Panel indicated that they were content for the website to launch on the planned date of the 31 March.

AGENDA ITEM 10: Draft Framework Agreement

Matthew Cole and the Secretariat gave a very brief outline of how the draft framework is shaping up. They talked about the plan with the Scottish Government Sponsor Team to have a joint discussion of the draft before the framework is signed off by the Panel and Ministers. Matthew also noted the plan for a Panel formation session exploring the Panel's role further – particularly as part of the public body landscape – at the next Panel meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 11: Feedback on the Poverty & Inequality Commission (PIC) money advice agencies' engagement & future opportunities for the Panel to engage further with the Experts by Experience Panel

Margaret Corrigan, who represented the Panel at this PIC session, provided an update. She noted that there was strong alignment in the messages from the advice sector in this session and those which the Panel heard in their sector-engagement in September and October last year. For example, the prevalence of energy advice-demand/difficulties with their 3rd party intervention agreements.

AGENDA ITEM 12: Desk-based research results on fuel

Kirsten Jenkins provided an overview of the research project, jointly funded by the Panel and the Fuel & Poverty in the UK's Energy Transition Fund, on practice, behaviour and impacts of energy rationing caused by of the energy crisis. The approach was a desk-based review alongside interviews with third and energy sector organisations. Energy-rationing behaviours were perceived as more likely in the elderly, single households and those with 2 or more children; households with no central heating; those with average incomes impacted by sudden cost-of-living rises and those on low incomes not in receipt of benefits. Self-rationing was perceived as more likely in off-gas grid rural households and one pre-payment meters. The research concluded with a number of recommendations. The Panel discussed the findings and recommendations and agreed to disseminating this valuable research through its stakeholder networks and on its website.

AGENDA ITEM 13: Reflections

The wealth of information and quality presentations over the course of the day were noted by the Panel and Matthew Cole drew the meeting to a close, thanking everyone for attending.

The next Panel meeting will be on Tuesday 25 April 2023 in Edinburgh.