

Chair of the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel

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21st December 2023

To: Gillian Martin MSP, Minister for Energy and Environment

Dear Minister,

The Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel would like to inform the Scottish Government that they note the changes to the 2024/2025 Budget. The Panel is extremely disappointed to hear that the Scottish Government intends to close the Fuel Insecurity Fund (FIF), and make deep cuts to the Housing and Buildings Level 3 budget line from April 2024. It is currently hard to see where this budget leaves the Scottish Government's statutory fuel poverty targets.

When he assumed office in March this year, the First Minister made a strong commitment to reducing fuel poverty, saying, "In a country as energy rich as Scotland, we should not have people living in fuel poverty," and backing this with a £10 million uplift to the Fuel Insecurity Fund. We would urge you to consider whether any headroom exists to provide support through a slimmed down FIF in 2024/25 to avoid a cliff edge for the people who currently rely on support delivered through the programmes currently sponsored through FIF.

We understand the profound fiscal challenges which the Scottish Government is facing, and that tough choices have to be made, but the FIF has and does provide vital support for fuel poor people, who are amongst the most vulnerable living in Scotland. They are facing, in real terms, energy bills this winter comparable with those of last winter. FIF support also, of course, provides an opportunity for households to access other longer term support too.

As a Panel we will reflect over the Christmas period and will provide a more detailed response in the new year.

Yours Sincerely,

Matthew Cole (Chairing Member)
Margaret Corrigan (Member)
Kirsten Jenkins (Member)
Alister Steele (Member)
Fraser Stewart (Member)

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