

Newsletter - October 2023

The Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel was established just over a year ago and, to mark this milestone, the Panel has put together a newsletter to share some of the highlights of the last year and a look forward to its plans for the rest of this year.

The Panel's Recommendations for a Social Tariff

As we approach winter with rising levels of consumer energy debt and for those with typical consumption (under the price cap) forecast to be paying almost £800 or 69% above their summer 2021 energy bills, the Panel, along with many others, has been thinking further about the transformative potential of a social tariff. The Panel has put together 8 recommendations for a social tariff which would meet the needs of those suffering fuel and extreme fuel poverty in Scotland. It has shared these with both UK and Scottish Governments and given evidence to the Energy Security and Net Zero Select Committee. The Panel has heard from people in fuel poverty trapped on the highest tariffs because they're living in temporary accommodation, without choice over their supplier, or with meters mismatched for their heating systems. Those off gas-grid face the particular challenge of coping with high electricity prices with little choice, other than to ration or not use heating, to manage their energy costs (see the link to our blog on fuel rationing below). This is a huge issue for rural areas. The Panel believe that if its social tariff recommendations were adopted by the UK Government, it would all but end fuel poverty in Scotland. (The Panel will shortly be blogging on its thinking behind its social tariff recommendations – keep an eye on the website for this).

Recommendations to the Scottish Government on its Fuel Poverty Strategy

One of the Panel's year one priorities was to reflect on the [Scottish Government's Tackling Fuel Poverty Strategy](#), (published in December 2021). The fuel poverty landscape has changed significantly since the Strategy was published with energy price inflation leading to a dramatic rise in the number of people living in fuel poverty in Scotland. At the peak of the energy prices this summer, the Scottish Government estimated that 37% of households (920,000) were living in fuel poverty, with 29% (720,000) of households living in extreme fuel poverty.

Energy price rises and fragile household incomes create significant new challenges in the mission to tackle fuel poverty. This challenge shines a light on why the Strategy and its delivery is a national priority, as well as the need for it to be re-calibrated to meet the challenges of the new fuel poverty landscape. The Panel recommendations were published at the beginning of September, and we will be discussing these at the upcoming Energy Action Scotland conference in November.

The Panel's visit to Inverness

At the end of August, as part of its public engagement, the Panel met in Inverness to hear from those living in fuel poverty in the Highlands about the financial and health impacts of living in a cold home. The Panel also heard from those who provide support and offer services to those suffering fuel poverty - Highland Council, Allenergy, Changeworks, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust and the Highlands & Islands Housing Associations Affordable Warmth group (HIHAAW) as well as to review the recent reports from Changeworks – [A perfect storm – fuel poverty in rural Scotland | Changeworks](#) and changeworks.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Fuel-Poverty-in-Rural-Scotland-The-Solutions.pdf) which have done so much to crystallise the causes and effects of rural fuel poverty impact, as well as setting out tangible solutions.

Matthew Cole, the Panel chair said, "The Panel's visit to Inverness offered a stark view of energy price impact on rural communities – with rural fuel poverty rates now estimated at 35% of households in fuel poverty – 2% higher than urban areas. A more nuanced analysis suggests that remote rural areas continue to have the highest rates of fuel poverty in Scotland at 49%. The outlook for this winter without significant support measures in place is grim.

Press coverage of the Panel's visit:

[Fuel poverty soundings taken in Inverness area from Scottish Government advisory group after 'devastating' Changeworks report \(inverness-courier.co.uk\)](https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk)

[Fuel poverty: Why hasn't Scotland tackled it properly yet? \(pressandjournal.co.uk\)](https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk)



Forthcoming Events



The Panel are attending the Energy Action Scotland Conference at the Golden Jubilee Conference Hotel in Clydebank. Where Matthew Cole and Dr Kirsten Jenkins are leading a workshop on the Panel's Strategy and Social Tariff Recommendations. Please see below for more information. We hope to see some of you there.

Annual Conference
23 and 24 November 2023

Leadership for Fuel Poor Households



News



In other news, the Panel have published a couple of topical fuel poverty blogs on Energy Rationing and on Scotland's Fuel Poverty definition – see below:

NEW BLOG POST

Energy rationing an
increasing coping
mechanism for dealing
with fuel poverty

By Kirsten Jenkins, Panel Member &
Fran Eatwell-Roberts, Analytical Manager

New Blog Post

Definition of Fuel Poverty Explained

*Fran Eatwell-Roberts, Research Manager,
blogs about Scotland's fuel poverty definition.*



THE SCOTTISH
FUEL POVERTY
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