

## Minutes of Meeting on 28 August 2024



**Venue:** AQ5  
**Time:** 09:00–17:30  
**Type:** Panel Meeting

## Attendees



**Panel:** Matthew Cole, Alister Steele and Kirsten Jenkins  
**Apologies:** Maggie Corrigan and Fraser Stewart  
**Secretariat:** Philippa Brosnan, Roanna Simpson and Trisha Melvin

## Agenda item 1: Welcome

Matt sent his apologies for running late, joining in time for a discussion of the budget. In his absence, the following points were noted:

- Maggie and Fraser’s apologies
- The Panel has had four online meetings since its last in-person meeting [on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May, 11<sup>th</sup> of June, and the 11<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of July]. At these meetings the following was discussed:
  - I. Review and ratification of the Panel’s response on Ofgem’s Call for input on the future of price protection.
  - II. The final version of the Panel’s Annual Report and the approach to publishing and communicating it in the pre-election period.
  - III. Preparing feedback for the Scottish Government on their progress towards meeting the fuel poverty targets as the date for publication of the first periodic report, under the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019, approaches in the first quarter of 2025,
  - IV. arrangements for the upcoming in-person Panel meetings on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July (subsequently rescheduled to the 28<sup>th</sup> of August) and the 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> of October.

- V. Review of Roanna's paper on the Fuel Poverty Funding Landscape and scoping the rural poverty evidence review
- VI. Agreeing the scope, invites and logistics of the Crisis Funding Roundtable
- VII. Update on The University of Edinburgh Energy, Society and Sustainability MScs – with a fuel poverty focus – and the Panel's support of these
- VIII. Thinking on the Panel's Research Plan

The Minutes from the Panel meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April were signed off subject to some small amendments.

Trisha provided an update on outstanding actions from previous meetings to ensure the Panel has an up-to-date picture of the current status.

Philippa introduced the draft whistle-blowing policy and the draft protocol which have been prepared by the Scottish Government Sponsor Team and invited comments from the Panel. The Panel noted some changes and agreed to send further thoughts by email. These will be collated and then sent round for further review.

Trisha gave an overview of the 2024-2025 budget. Philippa highlighted the communication from Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice on spending controls received earlier this week and the Panel spoke about what measures they might take in response and what impact this might have on their forward plan and overall effectiveness.

### **Agenda item 2: FP Funding landscape –walkthrough of paper**

Roanna gave a presentation to the Panel drawing out the key points from her funding landscape paper.

The Panel noted that they had found this a very useful and agreed that they will want to publish it when they have listened to stakeholder views on the funding landscape (scheduled later in this meeting) and heard the messages from the Crisis Funding Roundtable scheduled for October. The Panel also think it would be useful to keep the funding landscape review up to date and that it would be useful to review it yearly.

### **Agenda item 3: Area-based schemes – overview design**

Matt thanked Ed Chapman, Scottish Government's Area Based Schemes' Policy Lead, for taking the time to come and speak with the Panel. Introductions were done around the table. Matt advised the the Panel was keen to hear about what is working well, what's not working so well and what Ed's thoughts are on how Area Based Schemes are helping to address Fuel Poverty in Scotland. Ed gave a

presentation to the Panel, taking questions whilst delivering it. The presentation covered:

- Area Based Schemes – what they are, how they work and what they have delivered since their launch in 2013 to 2023
- Targeted criteria for ABS
- Household Eligibility for ABS
- Property eligibility for ABS
- Energy company obligations (ECO) and what it has delivered in Scotland
- ECO4 and what it has delivered in Scotland: household, property, flexible and GBIS eligibility
- GB Insulation Scheme Overview (GBIS)
- Eligibility rates for Scottish households in/at risk of Fuel Poverty

#### **Agenda item 4: Industry insights on funding schemes**

Matt welcomed Ed Rees, Senior Policy Manager, from Energy UK, and Mark Murphy, Head of UK Government Obligations at Scottish Power, to the meeting. Roanna shared the key findings from her review of the fuel poverty funding landscape. Ed and Mark shared some of the challenges which they face with the current landscape, including:

- the “stop/Start” nature of funding
- capacity issues across the landscape
- data issues
- short lead times from legislation to operational delivery
- lack of complementarity between funding schemes.

As well as talking to potential ways in which funding could be more effectively targeted and channelled. The session concluded with comments on the current level of consumer energy debt across the UK, which is in excess of £3 billion. Even the reported figure is probably an underestimate because of the time period used in calculating it.

#### **Agenda item 5: Changeworks and HES insights on funding schemes**

Matt welcomed Sophia Bates, Program Manager at Home Energy Scotland, Jamie Gray, Centre Manager for Changeworks’ delivery of the Home Energy Scotland service across South East Scotland, Amanda Palmer, Changeworks’ Net Zero Development Lead, and Lisa Bygate, Changeworks’ Affordable Warmth Services Team Manager to the meeting. Roanna shared the key findings of from her review of

the fuel poverty funding landscape, HES and Changeworks fed back that they thought that Roanna's paper was very useful. In discussion, the following points were made:

- Annual funding cycles makes longer term planning and delivery hard
- There are lots of issues with meters: getting through to suppliers with meter issues/queries; the challenge, for many, of understanding how their heating systems, meters and tariffs can best link for optimal bill management
- ABS would work much better on a 3 year funding cycle and the lack of standardised independent quality checking is a deficit
- Schemes can end of competing with each other because of the way they're designed.
- The sharing of data between trusted intermediaries is what works best

### **Agenda item 6: SCARF – insights on funding schemes**

Matt welcomed David, whom the Panel met previously at their meeting in Aberdeen in March. Matt invited David to share his views in the fuel poverty funding landscape. David spoke about what he thought could be improved upon and the benefits for doing this working towards reducing Fuel Poverty and meeting Net Zero targets David noted that generally the schemes are good but don't necessarily work well together, if they did then they could deliver more for the money spent. A lot of boilers are still being installed by HES – this isn't furthering the decarbonisation journey. ECO Flex 4 has been embraced in the N E of Scotland & the Borders with all their Local Authorities now involved. The value of SCARF's role is its holistic approach from liaising with LAs, procuring contactors who bring energy supplier funders with them, supporting the customer journey up to post-work checks and monitoring of benefits. There's a desperate need for the decoupling of electricity and gas prices to bring down the cost of electricity – reducing fuel poverty and incentivising low carbon energy efficiency measures.

### **Agenda item 7: Panel Reflections**

The Panel reflected on the day and what they had heard on the sessions. The Panel noted it was a long day but found it useful to hear from different perspectives across the sector.

### **Agenda item 8: AOB**

Western Isle's Trip - Trisha gave an update on the Western Isles' trip. Trisha advised the Panel that the secretariat had spoken with Kirsty MacLeod at TIG and how keen

different organisations on Lewis are to speak with the Panel. Trisha also covered the travel arrangements and advised what was left to book, saying she would send out a paper with an itinerary closer to the time. Research plan progress – Roanna updated the Panel on where she was with the Research plan and asked the Panel about increasing the length of the meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> of October so they can discuss it. The Panel are happy to do this, and Trisha advised she will extend the meeting to accommodate.

The Monitoring and Evaluation meeting that was supposed to take place on the 27<sup>th</sup> August had to be cancelled due to absences. The panel are looking to get this rescheduled and Trisha will take the action away to do this.

Ali Energy paper- Discussion of this paper was deferred due to lack of time. Winter Fuel Payment – The Cabinet for Social Justice has made the Panel aware of the Scottish Government decision to follow the UK Government intention to restrict the WFP to those on passport benefits because of the overall funding cut and that the launch of the Pension Age Winter Heating Payment (PAWHP) will be deferred to Winter 2025. The Panel will respond to the Cabinet Secretary on the WFP and the deferral of PAWHP shortly.

Matt drew the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for their time.

Next meetings – 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, 8<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024