

Minutes of Meeting on 19th January 2026



Venue: Online - via Teams
Time: 14:30 – 16:00 pm
Type: Panel Meeting

Attendees



Panel: Matt Cole, Kirsten Jenkins, Alister Steele and Fraser Stewart.
Secretariat: Philippa Brosnan, Trisha Melvin and Roanna Sefton.

Agenda item 1: Introductory Remarks

The Chair, Matthew Cole, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and wishing them a Happy New Year. Matt noted the key items for discussion at the meeting.

Agenda item 2: Recruitment update and new member induction

Matt provided an update on the recruitment of the two new Panel members following the interviews at the end of November. While final checks and formal acceptances are still in train, the Cabinet Secretary has approved the appointments, and Matt shared the new Panel Members' names while noting that there has been no public announcement yet.

Matt commented that both individuals bring distinct and highly complementary skill sets that will enhance the breadth of expertise within the Panel and support its work over the coming years. Matt said that the recruitment process had attracted a range of excellent candidates although only two appointments could be made – in line with the [Consequential Amendments](#) to the Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019.

Agenda item 3: Actions and update from last meeting

The Panel discussed engagement with the Scottish Fuel Poverty Policy Team, and this is now likely to be at the March meeting. It was noted that the Panel's work plan for April 2026-March 2027 is partly dependent on understanding the Scottish Government's approach to revising the fuel poverty strategy. It is hoped that a sufficiently developed outline of the intended plan for the strategy revision will offer clarity on the likely direction post-election.

The Panel emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum on its own commitments, including preparing the April 2026-March 2027 Workplan and the Annual Report for 2025-2026 due by the end of June. It was noted that the Panel's forthcoming Workplan may provide a useful introduction to the Panel's remit and planned activity for any new administration following the election.

Agenda item 4: The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's consultation on Warm Home Discount Cost Recovery

The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero launched a consultation on WHD cost recovery shortly before Christmas. Given the Panel's established views on standing charges and policy costs, a response reflecting these was [submitted](#).

Agenda item 5: Workplan Current and Future

The Panel reviewed progress against the current workplan and discussed priorities for the year ahead. Panel members noted the constructive discussion held in November, where several themes for future work began to take shape, alongside research options which would support work theme deliverables.

Local Authority Engagement

A key action for the remainder of this workplan year is engagement with island local authorities on the local challenges, barriers and opportunities they face in tackling fuel poverty. Introductory letters were sent by Matt to the relevant local authorities before Christmas, and the Secretariat will now arrange follow-up discussions with these authorities. Insights from these meetings will support a roundtable, which the Panel plans to hold in March.

Developing Future Themes

The Panel also considered how this work links to the planning for the 2026–27 workplan – the likely themes, over and above the focus on feeding into the work on the revised fuel poverty strategy, are:

- Health and fuel poverty
- Intersectionality
- Innovation

In addition, the Panel highlighted the value of undertaking cash vs bill discount analysis, recognising that this may help shape or inform strategy development and support decision-making related to future fuel poverty interventions.

The Panel agreed these should remain distinct priorities, noting that the current local authority engagement on island fuel poverty will help to inform the future innovation work.

What is taken forward for the 2026-2027 workplan will depend on the Panel's budget allocation as well as the dependency on the plan for revising the fuel poverty strategy, noted above.

The Secretariat provided clarification on the Panel's mandatory annual responsibilities. The Panel agreed that the longer draft list of themes should be refined to reduce overlap.

The Secretariat are to document and keep on file themes which the Panel are unlikely to have the capacity to take forward this year as the Panel agreed that the workplan aligned with available capacity, resources and funding, needs to be realistic.

Agenda item 6: Recruitment induction

The Panel discussed plans for welcoming the two new members, who are expected to begin their appointments in early February. The Scottish Government's Public Bodies Unit will provide the standard Scottish Government Onboarding public body induction.

The Secretariat will deliver additional Panel-specific induction to include a pre-starter information pack, introductory meetings with existing Panel members, briefings on Panel advice research, and ways of working. This will be complemented by a workshop providing an overview of the energy system and the wider policy context.

The Panel emphasised the importance of ensuring new appointees feel fully integrated into the Panel's work from the outset. The Secretariat will now work to identify meeting dates, for this calendar year, to align with the whole Panel's availability.

Agenda item 7: AOB

Matt invited reflections and thanked everyone for their time before closing the meeting.

Next meeting – TBC