

Minutes of Meeting on 16th April 2026



Venue: St Andrews House
Time: 9:15 – 04:45 pm
Type: Panel Meeting

Attendees



Panel: Kirsten Jenkins, Bryan Leask, Alister Steele (Chairing) and Olivia Swann.

Apologies: Matt Cole and Fraser Stewart.

Secretariat: Philippa Brosnan, Trisha Melvin and Roanna Sefton.

External Attendees: Ed Reed (Group Head of Training at Cornwall Insight) and Simon Kemp (Growth and Innovation Director at Warmworks)

Agenda item 1: Introductory Remarks

Alister opened the meeting and noted that he was chairing in Matt's absence. Apologies were recorded for Matt and Fraser.

Alister ran through the agenda, advising members that there were two presentations scheduled and that discussion and decisions would be required on the agenda items relating to recommendations to the Scottish Government on tackling fuel poverty in island communities, the workplan for 2026/27 and our response to Scottish Government questions on the Fuel Poverty Strategy Review. He also noted that it would be a full-day meeting.

Agenda item 2: Island Fuel Poverty Roundtable Recommendations

The Secretariat provided an introduction and gave a recap of activity to date. This included:

- Six individual meetings with the local authorities responsible for island communities.
- A subsequent roundtable discussion with all these local authorities.
- The production of a findings paper.

At the roundtable, six priorities were identified and discussed. Building on this work, the Panel is now looking to develop recommendations arising from these priorities.

The Panel discussed the six priorities in more detail, including:

- What each priority would look like in practice
- What should be included within each priority
- The possible order and sequencing of the priorities

Next Steps / Actions

The Secretariat will draft and circulate a recommendations paper to the Panel the Panel agreed to use the next few weeks to individually review the paper and record their own thoughts and comments. These contributions will be brought together during May in a final paper which will be forwarded to the Scottish Government along with a copy of the findings paper

Agenda Item 3: Cornwall Insight Energy Workshop

Panel members took part in a workshop led by Ed Reed (Cornwall Insight) focused on improving collective understanding of the GB gas and electricity markets and the consequences of how these markets impact consumers, particularly in relation to fuel poverty.

The session covered:

- How electricity and gas markets are structured and regulated.
- How costs flow through the energy system and into household and business bills.
- Key drivers of wholesale energy prices and recent market volatility.
- The interaction between decarbonisation goals, energy policy, and consumer costs.
- The role of consumers in the energy transition, including energy efficiency, electrification and flexibility.

The workshop supported panel members' understanding of current market dynamics, price pressures, and the challenges faced by low-income and vulnerable households. It also highlighted the distributional impacts of energy system changes and the importance of aligning decarbonisation policy with fairness and fuel poverty objectives.

Panel members engaged in discussion and Q&A throughout the session, which will inform ongoing consideration of priorities and future recommendations.

Agenda Item 4: Panel response to Scottish Government questions on the Fuel Poverty Strategy Review

The Panel discussed a refined set of questions from the Scottish Government on the Strategy, Theory of Change, Monitoring and Evaluation, which emerged from the Scottish Government input at the March Panel meeting.

The Panel worked through the questions in detail, sharing views and perspectives through a structured group discussion. This allowed members to reflect collectively on the issues raised and to identify key points and areas of agreement.

Next Steps/Actions

The Panel agreed that the Secretariat would collate the Panel's points and shared with Panel members for review and comment before sign off by the Chair. Once signed off, the Panel's response will be issued to the Scottish Government.

Agenda Item 5: Workplan & Research Plan

The Secretariat presented the draft 2026–2027 Workplan and Research Plan, outlining the proposed priorities and areas of focus for the Panel's work over the coming year.

The presentation highlighted the Panel's planned contributions to:

- The revision of the Fuel Poverty Strategy and the development of its monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Exploring innovation that can contribute to reductions in energy costs for households in or at risk of fuel poverty.
- Building on existing work on health outcomes.
- Applying an intersectional lens to understanding those at risk of fuel poverty
- Continued collaboration and engagement and required governance activity.

Panel members provided comments and feedback on the draft plan, reflecting on the balance of priorities, delivery feasibility within available resources, and alignment with emerging Scottish Government timelines for revising the Fuel Poverty Strategy.

It was noted that the workplan should remain flexible and subject to review after Quarter 1, particularly once further clarity is available on the Scottish Government's timetable for the Strategy review and policy direction.

Next Steps/Actions

The Secretariat will circulate a draft workplan. The Panel agreed to use the next few weeks to individually review the paper and record their own thoughts and comments. These contributions will be brought together at the end of May in a final workplan and research plan which will be forwarded to the Scottish Government for information before publication.

Agenda Item 6: Presentation on Innovating to Reduce Bills

Simon Kemp, Growth and Innovation Director, at Warmworks, delivered a presentation on innovation and the role of smart solutions in reducing energy bills, particularly for households experiencing or at risk of fuel poverty.

The presentation provided an overview of Warmworks' role in delivering large-scale, grant-funded retrofit programmes and its experience supporting fuel poor households through energy efficiency and low-carbon heating measures.

Simon outlined the growing complexity of the energy market and how smart energy devices and technologies can help households better manage energy use and costs. This included discussion of:

- Smart energy devices such as smart meters, controls and in-home monitors.
- The potential for matching technologies with appropriate tariffs to maximise savings.
- Demand-side flexibility and how consumers may interact with future energy systems.

The presentation also highlighted common challenges associated with smart technologies, including connectivity issues, accessibility, technical obsolescence and the risk of excluding households that are least able to engage. Emphasis was placed on the need for a just transition, ensuring that innovation supports, rather than disadvantages low-income and vulnerable consumers.

Panel members discussed the opportunities and risks associated with smart energy solutions, and the important role of social landlords and delivery partners in supporting households to navigate new technologies safely and effectively.

Agenda item 7: AOB

Alistair invited reflections and then thanked everyone for their contributions over a full agenda then closed the meeting.

Next meeting – Tuesday 16th June, online via Teams.