

Minutes of Meeting on 26th March 2026



Venue: Edinburgh St Andrews House
Time: 10:00 am – 17:00 pm
Type: Panel Meeting

Attendees



Panel: Matt Cole, Bryan Leask, Alister Steele, and Olivia Swann

Apologies: Fraser Stewart (Panel), Dorothy Ogle and Laura Dougan (Scottish Government)

Secretariat: Philippa Brosnan, Trisha Melvin and Roanna Sefton.

External Attendees - Scottish Government: Sam Doherty, Fuel Poverty Officer, Tom Lamplugh, Head of Social Policy Unit, Amy Nimegeer, Principal Research Officer, and Zachary Thompson, Statistician.

Agenda item 1: Introductory Remarks

Matt welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided an overview of the agenda for the day.

Matt asked if anyone had any pressing AOB items they wished to discuss at that point, advising that there would be further time allocated at the end of the meeting for any additional AOB items. No further items were raised at this stage.

The Scottish Government attendees joined the meeting at this point.

Agenda item 2: Update on the Fuel Poverty Strategy Theory of Change, outcomes, and monitoring data.

Amy provided an update on the developing Theory of Change and the associated outcomes framework for the Strategy. Amy gave a recap of the activities undertaken to date, including previous analytical work, early findings, and reflections that are feeding into the Strategy review.

Amy's presentation covered:

- A summary of earlier evidence gathering and stakeholder engagement
- The emerging outcomes and structure of the Theory of Change for the existing strategy
- Considerations for how outcomes for a revised strategy could be measured
- Links to the wider Strategy review process

Zach then presented the analytical component of the work, focusing on aspects of the fuel poverty definition and how the refreshed Strategy may need to consider data, measurement, and modelling issues, covering:

- How the current statutory definition operates, including the balance between required household data, minimum income thresholds, and fuel costs assumptions.
- Analytical challenges primarily relate to forecasting future fuel poverty, due to uncertainties around future incomes and energy prices, rather than limitations of current fuel poverty measurement.
- Potential improvements that could help ensure more reliable monitoring, particularly around household income, energy consumption patterns, and regional variations.
- Considerations for the Strategy review, including opportunities to strengthen evidence collection and align datasets more consistently across delivery partners.

In the subsequent discussion with the Panel, the following points were made:

- The fuel poverty targets and drivers need to be built in as the Strategy's aim is to make progress on delivering the targets and combating the fuel poverty drivers
- The Panel noted that while the SHCS provides a long-running time series, it does not directly attribute the impacts of WHS or ABS, reflecting methodological requirements to maintain survey representativeness rather than a limitation of the dataset.
- It was noted that in New Zealand an energy hardship approach is taken and the approach being taken in there on energy hardship and how it is measured.
- "How energy is used in the home" (one of the fuel poverty drivers) needs qualitative measurement reflecting fuel poverty lived experience but this is not attributable within the FP stats.
- The Panel noted that lived-experience data is already collected through the SHCS, though opportunities to expand this are limited by survey constraints, and that other datasets may help complement existing evidence. It was noted by analysts that due to costs limitations the number of questions in the SHS/SHCS likely cannot be expanded without reducing questions elsewhere in the survey.
- Assumptions in the Theory of Change for the revised strategy should be set out clearly

Amy and Zach are interested in further reflections from the Panel and will send across a refined list of questions for the Panel's consideration to support the next stage of development.

Agenda item 3: The Fuel Poverty Strategy review process

Sam, on behalf of the fuel poverty policy team provided an overview of the upcoming review of the Fuel Poverty Strategy, required under the 2019 Act, outlining the purpose of the review, and the intention to keep the scope focused. The types of evidence that will support the review will include SHCS 2024 findings, lived experience evidence, previous Panel advice, the periodic report consultation responses and analytical work linked to the Theory of Change.

The fuel poverty policy team noted that it would be helpful to the Scottish Government team if the Panel could offer its views on the Strategy review and Theory of Change approach, reviewing the key themes of previous advice and advise on evidence sources for the review. The Panel members were invited to provide written feedback by answering a question set proposed by the fuel poverty team.

Agenda Item 4: Induction.

To support Bryan and Livvy during their induction period, Kirsten, Matt and Alister provided some overviews of key Panel work and thinking since its first members were appointed in January 2022. Kirsten gave an overview of the statutory fuel poverty definition, its strengths and some of the challenges.

Matt presented on the Panel's work on a flexible energy discount mechanism and Alister concluded this agenda item a short presentation on the Panel's response to the Scottish Government's first triennial report on its progress towards meeting the fuel poverty targets.

The Scottish Government attendees left the meeting at this point.

Agenda item 5: Island Fuel Poverty Roundtable - reflections and drafting recommendations

Philippa introduced a paper setting out the findings and discussion of priorities at the Island Fuel Poverty Roundtable on the 17th of March. The Panel views on the proposed next steps were invited.

The Panel agreed that the immediate priority was to share its findings and summary with the Roundtable attendees, inviting any further reflections. Once this is complete, the Panel will draft some advice for incoming Ministers – post the election – on how the needs of Island communities should be reflected in the revised Strategy and also use this advice to engage with Ofgem and the Department of Energy Security and Net Zero. In the interim, the Panel would like to talk to Warmworks about some of its findings.

Agenda item 6: Workplan & research plan

The Panel reviewed progress on its current workplan for this year, and outstanding activity. The Panel considered the mandatory activity for the 2026/27 workplan and what resource might be left to focus on priority ideas once this was complete. The

Panel agreed that it would be helpful to organise its work into quarters aligned with its planned meeting dates.

The Panel asked Philippa to bring a draft of the workplan to the next meeting supplemented by a quarterly plan for discussion at the next meeting.

On research planning, the Panel discussed the options available within the budget and the importance of aligning any research activity with both the workplan and the time constraints of the Strategy review period.

Agenda item 7: Cash versus V Money off Bills

Roanna presented her analysis of the call for evidence on cash support versus money off energy bills, sharing the key findings with the Panel. The Panel noted that mitigating poverty, and fuel poverty in particular, doesn't come down to a binary choice between cash or money off bills and it's a very nuanced picture. The Panel will want to offer some comments on the findings from this very interesting piece of work. Timings of this to be confirmed as part of the work planning.

Agenda item 8: Fuel Poverty Strategy (England) and Warm Homes Plan – reflections

The Panel reflected on its recent engagement with DESNZ on the Fuel Poverty Strategy (England). The Secretariat has also met with its counterparts in England. Both interactions have been very useful. The Panel agreed that continued dialogue would be beneficial and that it would take up DESNZ's offer of a presentation on the Warm Homes Plan. The Secretariat is to test if the 16th April is feasible.

Agenda item 9: AOB

Philippa raised several points for noting:

- Revised National Performance Framework:

Public Bodies have been contacted by the Scottish Government to update them on the Scottish Government's draft NPF model which includes an updated purpose and a streamlined set of six wellbeing outcomes. The SG is keen to hear public body views on the draft NPF, particularly on addressing issues around implementation and accountability. Matt agreed to review the draft NPF and provide feedback.

- Model Code of Conduct:

Philippa advised that the Panel's Model Code of Conduct will need to be updated and that the new members will be required to sign the revised version once completed.

- Human Rights Bill:

Philippa also noted that, should a Human Rights Bill be introduced in the next

Parliament, it may well include a role for public bodies like the Panel, and this will have potential workplan and resource implications.

Matt invited reflections. Matt thanked everyone for their time and then closed the meeting.

Next meeting – Thursday 16th April in-person at St Andrew's House in Edinburgh