

Minutes of Meeting on 16th June 2026



Venue: Online via Teams
Time: 04:00 pm – 06:30 pm
Type: Panel

Attendees



Panel: Matt Cole, Kirsten Jenkins, Bryan Leask, Alister Steele, Fraser Stewart and Olivia Swann.

Secretariat: Philippa Brosnan and Roanna Sefton.

Agenda item 1: Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He noted that what would normally be covered under AOB would be discussed under agenda item 2 as a separate update, in recognition that not everyone was able to stay until the end of the meeting. The Chair noted that papers recirculated for further comment by the Secretariat would be framed around specific asks as much as possible going forward.

Agenda item 2: Updates

The Secretariat gave an update on the following points

- Ministerial responsibilities – Mr Gethins, MSP for Dundee City East, as Minister for Europe, External Affairs and Energy has responsibility, in addition to fuel poverty, for Energy and the Buildings Heat and Energy and Heat Network Scotland Bill and he reports directly to the First Minister. It was also noted that energy was the first subject of the first debate of the new Parliament. The Secretariat covered the fuel-poverty relevant committee structure.
- The new Scottish Government has a very strong focus on public service reform, with an emphasis on collaboration, including working holistically and in a more streamlined way and at pace including improved use of data, and reiterating the Christie principle of prevention. The significant fiscal challenge in public service delivery was also emphasised. The Panel noted that much of its advice to date aligns with these public service reform objectives.

- The Panel's Business Manager moved on to a new role at the beginning of June. The Chair's reviewed the shape of that role with the Secretariat and steps are underway to backfill it. The hope is that a new person will be in post by October.
- The Panel's communications' support contract is out to tender, with a 3-year option and 2, 1 year extension, options. This will avoid the need to re-procure at the point when 4 of the existing Panel members will leave. As the website maintenance contract end date approaches, the Secretariat will also be looking at this contract.
- There are a number of additional short meetings which will need to be set up to brief the Panel on the Scottish House Condition Survey now that the local authority data has been published, an overview from Department of Energy Security and Net Zero's team on the Warm Homes Plan, and discussion with the Scottish Government's policy leads on the Warmer Homes Scotland eligibility criteria.
- The Chair also noted that he will be meeting with Caroline Flint, Chair of the Committee on Fuel Poverty in July to explore areas of mutual interest between the Panel and the Committee. The Panel will be participating in Changeworks re-launch of their Perfect Storm report and also running a breakout session at the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations' conference – later this month.
- The Scottish Government Fuel Poverty Team are considering the Panel's response to their questions on the revision of the Fuel Poverty Strategy.

Action: The Secretariat to arrange the additional meetings.

Agenda item 3: Cash versus bills - findings

The Secretariat talked the Panel through their reflections to date on the findings of the Cash v. Bills' work, noting that:

- A nuanced approach to fuel poverty alleviation required.
- Scottish Government's success in reducing fuel poverty will be assessed against fuel poverty modelling.
- The findings strengthen the case for a social tariff and one which follows the model advocated by the Panel – applied as a unit rate discount. levels using the current definition.
- Bill reduction may work better where women are experiencing economic abuse.
- A need to invest in preventative relational support upstream, including investment in energy efficiency improvement and increasing advice service funding.
- Better evaluation of support in terms of both fuel poverty and health system impacts.

Action: The Secretariat will draft a blog setting out the Panel's reflections to accompany the findings' report and circulate. Post any revisions, the Chair will sign off for publication on the Panel website.

Agenda item 4: Innovation research – shaping the scope

The Panel discussed what it means by “innovation” and how this theme, in the April 2026-March 2027 workplan could be taken forward. The Panel view is that innovation is characterised as a new/different approach/es to reducing fuel poverty by reducing bills and/or energy consumption. These could be a technological/policy or practice change. There are a lot of innovative projects going on across the UK, it would be interesting to see whether they’re working and if they are scalable in the Scottish context including within devolved competence. One approach might be to identify different projects, via a broad sweep, organise them into how they meet criteria such as technological innovation, social innovation and policy innovation, picking out selected projects for a closer look at how they’re delivering on fuel poverty reduction, with a view to highlighting projects particularly worth exploring to Scottish Ministers.

Action: The Secretariat to reflect on the Panel’s initial thoughts and begin to test what might be feasible within budgetary and resource constraints

Agenda item 5: Response to Scottish Government question on the Buildings (Heating and Energy Performance) and Heat Networks (Scotland) Bill

The Secretariat gave a reminder on the context to this agenda item. The Scottish Government paused the introduction of a Heat in Buildings Bill in the last parliament because of the potential for it to result on detriment to vulnerable consumers. The Panel supported this in its [letter](#) to Ministers in December 2025, noting that it should not slow progress on fuel poverty action and also raising concerns about the lack of reference to fuel poverty and the fuel poverty targets in the proposed replacement [bill](#). Scottish Government has asked the Panel to provide more information on its concerns on the lack of reference to fuel poverty. The Panel noted that it thinks its imperative that fuel poverty is named on the face of the bill given the resulting heat decarbonisation strategy will be crucial in tackling the fuel poverty driver of poor energy efficiency where Scottish Government has the most significant legislative, fiscal, and policy levers to effect change.

Action: The Secretariat to respond to the Scottish Government on behalf of the Panel.

Agenda item 6: Fuel poverty in the Islands – Findings' Report, Recommendations and next steps

The Secretariat noted that a draft of the Island Fuel Poverty Recommendations has been reviewed by the Panel. This has highlighted several points for further discussion. These were discussed by the Panel, and the Secretariat undertook to update this report and to circulate a further draft. The Findings' report does not need further discussion although Panel members may choose to take a further look at it.

Action: The Secretariat to send a revised version of the Island Fuel Poverty recommendations to the Panel by the 19th of June.

Agenda item 7: AOB

The workplan was briefly touched on with the Panel noting some repositioning of points in the introduction.

Action: The Secretariat to make the necessary changes to the introduction.

Next Meeting: Tuesday 30th June 2026, online (MS Teams), 2.00 – 5.00 pm