



# Warm Homes and Energy Efficiency

## SCOTTISH WARM HOMES CAMPAIGN PETITION ON THE ABOLITION OF FUEL POVERTY

### Supplementary briefing for Transport and Environment Committee on petition PE-123

This petition has been referred to the Transport and Environment Committee. The Social Inclusion, Housing and the Voluntary Sector Committee has already heard the petition and has agreed to an investigation into fuel poverty at which PE-123 will be considered; the petition has also been referred to the Health and Community Care Committee. However, this does not imply that any work done by the Transport and Environment Committee will be mere duplication of work done by these other committees.

Although the other committees will be able to investigate the environmental impacts of fuel poverty and energy inefficiency this will not be their primary focus. Naturally, the Social Inclusion Committee will focus on issues most relevant to its remit, it is unlikely to carry out an extensive investigation into the environmental impacts caused by domestic sector energy inefficiency or the relationship between, for example, housing policy and climate change policy. Environmental considerations are more properly within the expertise and interests of the Transport and Environment Committee and we ask therefore that the committee instigates an investigation which would compliment the work of the other committees.

There are currently a number of opportunities which could be utilised to deliver improvements in this sector, these include a range of sustainability indicators, UK legislation and various other relevant pieces of legislation and policy, some of which are under review.

### **SUSTAINABILITY INDICATORS AND THE DOMESTIC SECTOR**

We believe sustainability indicators in relation to the domestic sector are vital, these could include:

- a) An assessment of the energy efficiency of all households across Scotland. The UK Government has supported moves towards the implementation of 'vendor's packs' in England and Wales which include a survey to be commissioned by the seller, this survey is to include an energy audit. Pilot projects have begun in Bristol into vendors packs.

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution has called for the energy labelling of all houses in the UK as this could 'make an important contribution to

reducing climate change' and sees the move towards seller surveys as an 'excellent opportunity'.<sup>1</sup>

***We call for the introduction of seller surveys with energy audits. We also call for the licensing of the private rented sector which would require energy assessments to be carried out on change of occupation. This would result in the energy auditing of both the rented and the owner-occupied sectors.***

b) Excess Winter Death rates are caused by several factors but housing is central, these would therefore be useful indicators.

***We call for Excess Winter Death rates to be accepted as sustainability indicators which measure the impact of current policy.***

c) An assessment of the effectiveness of all policy and spending aimed at, or effective upon, energy efficiency in the domestic sector in Scotland. This would require such as the compilation of the nature, extent and effectiveness of the work carried out under the Warm Deal/Healthy Homes Initiative.

***We call for the collection, analysis and publication of such figures by the Executive with a view to measuring their effects upon fuel poverty, energy efficiency and CO<sub>2</sub> output.***

Combined with the figures for the domestic sector's share of CO<sub>2</sub> output these measures and indicators would give a good insight into the sustainability of the domestic sector. This would allow for policies to be measured for effectiveness in relation to sustainable development and climate change policy. That CO<sub>2</sub> output from the domestic sector increased by 2% between 1990 and 1995, would imply that this sector, and policy relating to it, needs to be closely monitored.<sup>2</sup>

## **THE WARM HOMES AND ENERGY CONSERVATION BILL**

Many of the issues surrounding fuel poverty and energy efficiency are being tackled at Westminster but do not relate to Scotland. The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Bill passed its second reading at Westminster on March 10th 2000. The Bill was amended and supported by a Standing Committee of the House of Commons on April 12th and has a very good chance of being implemented. The Bill requires the development and implementation of a strategy which ensures that low-income households can be kept warm at an affordable cost through improvements in energy efficiency. The Bill also requires time-scales for these achievements and periodic assessments. However, this Bill relates only to England and Wales.

***We would like to see a similar undertaking in Scotland, possibly as an integral part of the forthcoming Housing Bill. We believe firm targets to eradicate fuel poverty within specific time-scales, an overall strategy to achieve this, and a proper and periodic assessment of the effectiveness of this strategy are vital in the fight to eradicate fuel poverty and ease the pressures of climate change.***

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<sup>1</sup> Commission's letter to Nick Raynsford - Housing Minister, [www.rcep.org.uk](http://www.rcep.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> National Environmental Technology Centre, Greenhouse Gas Inventories for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland:1990 and 1995 (November 1999)

## OTHER RELEVANT LEGISLATION

As there is no separate sustainability implementation strategy it is vital the Transport and Environment Committee takes a lead role in ensuring that all relevant policy and legislation takes into account policy objectives in relation to sustainable development and climate change. Relevant housing policy and legislation includes;

**Building Regulations** (currently under review) we ask that the committee supports moves toward making energy efficiency requirements bind on existing properties. We also call upon separate energy efficiency requirements for heating systems and an end to the practice which allows for more efficient heating systems to be used as trade-off for lower thermal efficiency of materials;

**The Housing Bill** is an excellent opportunity to review the **Tolerable Standard** with a view to putting a measurement for energy efficiency in it. This Bill would also be the apposite legislation for **energy auditing** of all properties in Scotland on change of occupation.

**The Home Energy Conservation Act** (1995) is a welcome initiative but needs to be properly funded and given guidance through national dissemination of best practice and national co-ordination via a national coordinator.

## CONCLUSIONS

We would like to see an assessment of the domestic sector's effects upon CO<sub>2</sub> output and climate change and measurement of the effectiveness of policies relating to this.

We call for the establishment of firm and bold targets to substantially improve the sustainability of the domestic sector along with a strategy to achieve these targets and a periodic measurement of the effectiveness of such a strategy, with a view to revision where necessary.

We believe this issue is a classic example of what sustainability is about. It connects environmental, health, social and economic concerns. Substantial increases in domestic energy efficiency would result in increased employment, improved health, reduced winter death rates, better educational achievements and aid in our attempts and responsibilities in relation to global climate change. It is an excellent opportunity for the creation of joined-up policy and government and, as such, we ask that you take this issue on board and co-ordinate your efforts with the other relevant committees.

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