

Information Further to Ministerial Answers

Information further to OAQ(3)1470(FM) issued by Jane Davidson, the Minister for Environment, Sustainability and Housing, in December 2008

To David Lloyd:

The First Minister has asked me to write to you with a response to the supplementary question you asked on 25 November on how many homes have benefited from free insulation since Gordon Brown's announcement.

The announcement made by the Prime Minister in September was of a commitment from energy companies to invest an estimated £910 million in making homes more energy efficient through the existing Carbon Emissions Reduction Target (CERT) programme, and a new Community Energy Saving Programme (CESP). Details of how the CESP programme will be delivered are still being considered by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and my officials are working closely with colleagues in England on this.

It is important to note that both the CERT and CESP programmes are non-devolved issues, and while we require Eaga, who manage our Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES), to report data on the number of households in Wales that receive energy efficiency measures (some 18,500 households in 2007-08), we cannot require energy companies to report data to Wales level under CERT and CESP. Energy companies are required to report activity under the programmes to Ofgem, but only as amount of carbon saved, not as number of homes treated. There is also no obligation to achieve a set level of carbon savings in Wales or to report activity at Wales level.

Wales' share of CERT funding should be worth around £60 million a year over the next 3 years and I am concerned that without access to data on the activity of energy companies, and the level of investment they are making in Wales, we cannot be sure that we are maximising the funding available to Welsh householders to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. This is one of the reasons why I asked the Chair of the Fuel Poverty Advisory Group to lead a meeting with the 6 big energy companies and the Energy Retailers Association, on 2 December.

I believe that working in co-operation with the energy companies is the right way forward to address this, and other issues of concern. I am pleased to be able to tell you that the meeting was very constructive and that we have agreed to continue to meet on a regular basis. The energy companies indicated at the meeting that the data they provide to Ofgem could be broken down to identify carbon savings at Wales level, and that this could in turn be used to provide an estimate of the number of Welsh homes that have received investment. I have asked my officials to pursue this with Ofgem and I will be happy to advise Assembly Members on the outcome of those discussions.