

# Insulate all Welsh homes against both the heat and the cold...introduce grants that are open to all!

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 9 January 2023  
Petitions Committee | 9 Ionawr 2023

Reference: SR22/4475-1

Petition Number: P-06-1314

Petition title: Insulate all Welsh homes against both the heat and the cold...introduce grants that are open to all!

Text of petition: With energy prices sky rocketing and millions of Welsh families facing extreme fuel poverty, its time to introduce grants, open to all, which would allow all the people of Wales to properly insulate their homes against both the heat and the cold.

It is shocking that Wales has some of the worst insulated homes in the whole of Europe. A grant of 25to50% towards the cost of insulating properties would encourage people to invest in making their homes more energy efficient and reduce their emissions

Years of underinvestment in properly insulating Welsh homes has led to the situation where people are vulnerable to energy price rises.

That's why we are calling for emergency grants that are available to all so households facing the prospect of cold and damp homes this winter can pay for simple insulation measures. We need a Green New Deal open to homeowners, landlords and councils which will ensure homes are warm and comfortable, reduce carbon emissions and create thousands of green jobs.

Everybody has the right to a warm home, yet this year could see millions of Welsh people having to choose between heating their homes or eating...this simply cannot be allowed to happen!



Insulation is one of the most efficient ways to save energy since it keeps you warm in the winter and cool in the summer.

The energy companies, who are making billions of profit when so many are fearful about keeping warm this winter, should use their profits to pay for an emergency national insulation programme.

## 1. Background

In July 2019, the Welsh Government's [Decarbonisation of Homes in Wales Advisory Group](#) published the "[Better Homes, Better Wales, Better World](#)': [Independent review on decarbonising Welsh homes](#)' report. The report noted:

Wales has some of the oldest and least thermally efficient housing stock in the UK and Europe. 32% of the Welsh housing stock was built before 1919, when there were no construction standards in terms of thermal performance. Just 10% of Welsh homes were built in the last 18 years, during which time energy performance requirements have changed dramatically.

The report recommended large-scale retrofitting to ensure that all existing homes in Wales reach EPC A by 2050. This recommendation supports the Welsh Government's aim of achieving [net zero carbon emissions in Wales](#) by 2050.

There are a number of Welsh and UK Government schemes that can provide support for householders seeking to better insulate their home. However, much of

the support is targeted, focusing on social housing properties and households on low incomes.

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Welsh Government has made a commitment to decarbonise more homes through retrofit in its [Programme for Government](#).

In social housing, the Welsh Government funds the [Optimised Retrofit Programme](#) (ORP). As detailed in the Minister for Climate Change's letter to the Chair, ORP can help improve insulation as part of a suite of measures to support decarbonisation. ORP is testing a number of approaches to decarbonisation that it is hoped will be rolled out to other tenures from 2023.

In the private sector, Welsh Government support for insulation retrofit is carried out through the Nest programme. Nest offers free energy efficiency installations, which can include insulation, to applicants who meet the following [eligibility criteria](#):

- You own or privately rent your home (not from a local authority or housing association)
- Your home is energy inefficient and expensive to heat
- You or someone you live with receives a means tested benefit OR has a chronic respiratory, circulatory or mental health condition and an income below the defined thresholds

In March 2021, the Welsh Government published the [Tackling Fuel Poverty 2021-2035 Plan](#). This plan aims to ensure that no more than 5% of households in Wales will be living in fuel poverty by 2035 'as far as is reasonably practicable' and recommends improving the energy efficiency of households to achieve this. The Welsh Government is due to review progress on the plan in 2023.

Between December 2021 and April 2022, the Welsh Government ran [a consultation on the next iteration of the Warm Homes programme](#), in advance of the Nest scheme's end in March 2023. The Welsh Government has not yet published a response to this consultation.

On 14 June 2022, the First Minister [ruled out an emergency insulation programme](#) for vulnerable households this winter, citing a lack of both UK Government investment and skilled labour. The First Minister also noted that the variation in

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housing types across Wales made it impossible to formulate a 'one size fits all' approach to insulation retrofit.

On 8 November, the Minister for Climate Change made a Plenary statement on [improving the energy efficiency of Welsh homes](#). In it she outlined the Welsh Government's focus will continue to be on supporting lower income homes who are in fuel poverty to reduce their bills and their carbon emissions.

### 3. UK Government action

The Great Britain-wide [Energy Company Obligation \(ECO\)](#) can provide support with retrofit insulation, but is generally restricted to households receiving benefits or living in social housing (in both cases the property must have a low energy efficiency rating). However, local authorities have some flexibility to widen the eligibility criteria if they participate in the [ECO4 Flex scheme](#).

In November 2022, the UK Government announced a consultation on the [ECO+ scheme](#), which it is proposed will extend the benefits of ECO to any home within council tax bands A-C (in Wales) that has an energy performance certificate rating of D or lower. ECO+ is scheduled to begin in April 2023.

### 4. Welsh Parliament action

In January 2022, the [Equality and Social Justice Committee](#) launched an [inquiry into fuel poverty and the Warm Homes programme](#). The Committee published a [report](#) on 18 May 2022, which was followed by a [joint response](#) from the Minister for Social Justice and the Minister for Climate Change on 11 July. All the recommendations were accepted either in full, or in principle. The report was [debated in plenary](#) on 21 September.

The [Climate Change, Environment, and Infrastructure Committee](#) has been running a multi-phase inquiry since March 2022 on the decarbonisation of Welsh homes. The Committee began [initial scoping work](#) from March to May 'to assess progress made to date before determining the areas [the Committee] would like to investigate in detail as part of a longer-term programme of work.' The Committee is now undertaking [an inquiry](#), assessing decarbonisation of homes in the private rented and owner occupied housing sectors. A report on the Committee's findings is due to be released soon.

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