

Cross-Party Group Annual Report: Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

Date: 5 December 2022

Cross Party Group on Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

1. Group membership and office holders.

Chair:

Mark Isherwood MS

Members of the Senedd:

Jane Dodds MS

Janet Finch-Saunders MS

John Griffiths MS

Mike Hedges MS

Sioned Williams MS

Vikki Howells MS

Secretariat

Ben Saltmarsh, Head of Wales, National Energy Action

Email: ben.saltmarsh@nea.org.uk.

2. Previous Group Meetings since the last AGM.

Meeting 1.

Meeting date: 8 November 2021 (Online on Zoom)

Attendees:

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| Adam Scorer, NEA | Joanna Seymour, Warm Wales |
| Andrew Bettridge (for John Griffiths MS), Senedd | Jonathan Cosson, Warm Wales |
| Ben Saltmarsh, NEA Cymru | Kirsty Rees (for Mike Hedges MS), Senedd |
| Bethan Edwards, Maria Curie | Lee Phillips, Money and Pensions Service |
| Brian Hart, NEA | Mark Alexander, Welsh Government |
| Ceri Cryer, Age Cymru | Mark Isherwood MS, Senedd |
| Claire Durkin, NEA Trustee | Matt Copeland, NEA |
| Claire Pearce-Crawford, Melin Homes | Michael Anderson, Ofgem |
| Crispin Jones, Arbed Am Byth | Mike Potter, NEA |
| Dale Thomas (for Lee Waters MS), Senedd | Neville Rookes, Welsh Local Government Association |
| David Wallace, Melin Homes | Nigel Winnan, Wales and West Utilities |
| Elaine Robinson, Cardiff University | Richard Hauxwell-Baldwin, MSC Charitable Foundation |
| Eleri Williams, Future Generations | Sam Worrall, Gypsies and Travellers Wales |
| Faye Patton, Care and Repair | Simon Lannon, Cardiff University |
| George Jones, Older People Wales | Simone Lowthe-Thomas, Severn Wye Energy Agency |
| Haf Elgar, Friends of the Earth Cymru | Sioned Williams MS, Senedd |
| Hugh Kocan, Bevan Foundation | Vikki Howells MS, Senedd |
| Jack Wilkinson-Dix, Energy Saving Trust | William Jones, Citizens Advice Ceredigion |
| Jane Hutt MS, Welsh Government | |

Summary of issues discussed:

Focus:

This was the first meeting of the CPG this Senedd term.

With soaring energy prices, reducing incomes, and many still living in cold, leaky homes, this meeting reflected on a critical winter ahead.

The CPG provides members from all parties with an opportunity to meet with stakeholders and share ideas about what actions can be taken to solve fuel poverty and ensure a just transition. The Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, joined members to outline the Welsh Government's priorities in this area and take questions from the group.

The Election of Chair and Secretariat was held. Mark Isherwood MS was elected unopposed to continue as Chair of the Group. Ben Saltmarsh was elected unopposed as Secretary to the Group.

Ben Saltmarsh, Head of Wales at National Energy Action, presented on:

- pre-pandemic levels of fuel poverty in Wales
- impacts of the onset of the energy price crisis
- calls for deeper protection and direct, targeted financial support for low-income households this winter

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice:

- updated members on the Welsh Government's current priorities in this area, including:
 - latest developments with Welsh Government's *Tackling Fuel Poverty Plan 2021-2035*
 - timeline for the publication of revised fuel poverty estimates in Spring 2022
 - recent representations to the UK Government
 - plans to launch a consultation on the next iteration of the Warm Homes Programme
- took questions from the Group

In accordance with procedures, the meeting concluded with confirmation that forms to formally (re)establish the CPG would be submitted to the Senedd in due course.

Meeting 2.

Meeting date: 14 March 2022 (Online on Zoom)

Attendees:

Mark Isherwood MS (Chair of the CPG), **Adam Scorer** (NEA), **Hayden Banks** (NEA), **Brian Hart** (NEA), **Jane Hutt MS** (Minister for Social Justice), **William Bell** (Cyd Innovation), **Kate Calladene** (EON), **Jonathan Cosson** (Warm Wales), **Leonardo Costa** (Ofgem), **David Cowdrey** (MCS Charitable Foundation), **Ceri Cryer** (Age Cymru), **Bethan Edwards** (Marie Curie), **Steffan Evans** (Bevan Foundation), **Heledd Fychan MS** (South Wales Central), **Mabon Gwynfor MS** (Senedd), **Frank Hemmes** (Ofgem), **Sam Hughes** (Citizens Advice), **Suan John** (Plaid Cymru), **William Jones** (Citizens Advice), **George Jones** (Older People's Commissioner for Wales), **Matthew Kennedy** (CIH Cymru), **Francesca Kirtley-Paine** (Liquid Gas UK), **Simon Lannon** (Cardiff University), **Simone Lowthe-Thomas** (Severn Wye Energy Agency), **Kiera Marshall** (Plaid Cymru), **Christopher McDermott** (Ofgem), **Jason McLellan** (Office of Carolyn Thomas), **Ken Moon** (Senedd), **Lia Murphy** (Ofgem), **Faye Patton** (Care & Repair Cymru), **Lee Phillips** (Money and Pensions Service), **David Renwick** (EON), **Elaine Robinson**, **Joanna Seymour** (Warm Wales), **Jack Wilkinson-Dix** (Energy Savings Trust), **Nigel Winnan** (West & Wales Utilities), **Lucien Wise** (Senedd)

Summary of issues discussed:

Focus:

This meeting focused on households across Wales continuing to face soaring energy prices, with Ofgem having recently confirmed a 54% increase in the cost of the energy price cap from 1 April 2022.

With devastating consequences for low-income, vulnerable households, the Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt MS, and senior representatives from Ofgem, joined the Group to present and take questions.

Adam Scorer, Chief Executive of NEA (and Acting Secretary in Ben Saltmarsh's absence due to illness), provided opening remarks, outlining the surge in demand for NEA's advice services in response to rising prices, and the UK Government's inadequate rebate scheme not meeting the scale and depth of the crisis.

Leonardo Costa (Head of Price Cap Policy) and Frank Hemmes (Head of Compliance) at Ofgem took questions from the Group relating to the price cap and relevant matters.

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice:

- updated members on the Welsh Government's current priorities in this area, including:
 - a reflection on the crisis and Welsh Government's Cost of Living Summit, where she heard from key stakeholders including NEA
 - outlining the Welsh Government's recent package of expanded measures to support those in need
 - noting the Senedd's Equality and Social Justice Committee's ongoing inquiry into the Warm Homes Programme, and Welsh Government's current consultation on the future of the same
- took questions from the Group

Meeting 3.

Meeting date: 11 July 2022 (Online on Zoom)

Attendees:

Mark Isherwood MS (Chair of the CPG), **Ben Saltmarsh** (NEA), **Hayden Banks** (NEA), **Mike Potter** (NEA), **Jane Hutt MS** (Minister for Social Justice), **Ben Gascoyne** (NHS Wales), **Claire Durkin** (NEA Trustee), **Crispin Jones** (Gwerin Management), **David Cowdrey** (MCS Charitable Foundation), **Deian Timms** (Office of Future Generations Commissioner for Wales), **Faye Patton** (Care & Repair Cymru), **Ffion Haf** (Plaid Cymru), **Francesca Kirtley-Paine** (Liquid Gas UK), **Gavin Dick** (NRLA), **George Jones** (Office of Older People's Commissioner for Wales), **Ioan Bellin** (on behalf of Rhys ab Owen MS), **Jack Wilkinson-Dix** (EST), **Jo Harry** (Care & Repair

Cymru), **Jo Seymour** (Warm Wales), **Jonathan Cosson** (Warm Wales), **Jocelle Lovell** (Cwmpas), **Josh Lovell** (NRLA), **Kate Calladene** (E.ON Energy), **Ken Cronin** (Senedd), **Lee Phillips** (MaPS), **Liz Lambert** (Cardiff Council), **Matthew Cole** (Fuel Bank Foundation), **Meilyr Tomos** (Gwynedd Council), **Neville Rookes** (WLGGA), **Richard Hauxwell-Baldwin** (MCS Charitable Foundation), **Simon Lannon** (Cardiff University), **Steffan Evans** (Bevan Foundation), **Stephen Chamberlain** (Welsh Government), **Tash Wynne** (Marie Curie), **William Jones** (Citizens Advice Ceredigion)

Summary of issues discussed:

Focus:

With new modelled estimates from the Welsh Government highlighting that up to 45% of households in Wales may now be in fuel poverty, and soaring energy costs continuing to hit lower income households disproportionately, this meeting focused on the Welsh Government's ongoing actions to support those most in need, including rural, off-gas communities in Wales.

Ben Saltmarsh, Head of Wales at National Energy Action, presented on:

- latest developments with the energy crisis, including a warning that energy prices were set to rise significantly again in October 2022
- recent announcements from the UK Government and Ofgem
- NEA's concerns and continued calls for UK Government to provide support commensurate with the crisis and need for Ofgem to protect vulnerable and low-income consumers this winter and beyond

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice:

- updated members on the Welsh Government's current priorities in this area, including:
 - shared representations to the UK Government and Ofgem
 - engagement with stakeholders about what more the Welsh Government can do to support households in need
 - developments with the Welsh Fuel Support Scheme and national Fuel Voucher Scheme
- took questions from the Group

Matt Cole, Head of Fuel Bank Foundation:

- presented on the Welsh Government's new £4m Fuel Voucher Scheme to help households in crisis across Wales who need to pay for their energy in advance, including recruitment of partners and how to get involved
- took questions from the Group

Ken Cronin, CEO of UKIFDA:

- presented on issues surrounding the rising cost of home heating oil, current challenges facing distributors and households, and what support is available for low-income, vulnerable customers
- took questions from the Group

Meeting 4.

Meeting date: 28 November 2022 (Online on Zoom)

Attendees:

Mark Isherwood MS (Chair), **Sioned Williams MS**, **Rhys Taylor** (on behalf of **Jane Dodds MS**), **Ioan Bellin** (on behalf of **Rhys Ap Owen MS**), **Billy Jones** (on behalf of **Luke Fletcher MS**), **Cathy Bevan** (on behalf of **Huw Irranca-Davies MS**), **Ben Saltmarsh** (NEA), **Hayden Banks** (NEA), **Mike Potter** (NEA), **Jane Hutt MS** (Minister for Social Justice), **Claire Durkin** (NEA Trustee), **Cara Holmes** (Citizens Advice Cymru), **Rose Forman** (PropertyMark), **Becky Ricketts** (Care & Repair Cymru), **Sandy Hore-Ruthven** (Severn Wye Energy Agency), **Meilyr Tomos** (Gwynedd Council), **Most Revd Andy John** (Archbishop of Wales), **Crispin Jones** (Gwerin Management), **James Calder** (Liquid Gas UK), **William Jones** (Ceredigion Citizens Advice), **Steven Reynolds** (Cyd Innovation), **Haf Elgar** (FoE Cymru), **David Cowdrey** (MCS Charitable Foundation), **Danny Grehan** (Senedd), **Martin Campbell** (Ofgem), **Simon Lannon** (Cardiff University), **Lee Phillips** (Money and Pensions Service), **Joshua Lovell** (NRLA), **Ryland Doyle** (Senedd), **Bethan Sayed** (Climate Cymru), **Faye Patton** (Care & Repair Cymru), **Kate Lowther** (Royal College of Psychiatrists), **Gavin Dick** (NRLA), **Nigel Winnan** (WWU), **Elaine Robinson** (Cardiff University), **Jonathan Cosson** (Warm Wales), **Liz Lambert** (Cardiff Council), **Joseph Carter** (Asthma + Lung UK), **Joanna Seymour** (Warm Wales), **James Adamson** (NHS Wales), **Rebecca Brown** (Ofgem), **Jack Wilkinson-Dix** (EST), **Maureen Howell** (Welsh Government), **Nina Ley** (Welsh Government), **Catrin Stephenson** (Welsh Government), **Gareth Phillips** (Welsh Government), **Louisa Petchey** (NHS Wales), **Claire Pearce-Crawford** (Melin Homes)

Summary of issues discussed:

Focus:

With the cost of energy continuing to rise further still, deepening hardship across the country, ensuring that households across Wales receive adequate support and protection has never been more important. Following further developments from the UK and Welsh Government, this meeting focused on support that's currently available and what more needs to be done to help and protect those most in need.

This meeting also included this year's AGM, following the first meeting of the Group during this Senedd term in November 2021. Mark Isherwood MS was elected unopposed to continue as Chair of the Group. Ben Saltmarsh was elected unopposed as Secretary to the Group.

Ben Saltmarsh, Head of Wales at National Energy Action, presented on:

- the UK Government's Energy Price Guarantee
- a summary of support that's available in response by the UK Government and Welsh Government
- NEA's current concerns and calls on the UK Government, Ofgem and Welsh Government
- forthcoming events, including NEA's Fuel Poverty Awareness Day

Jane Hutt MS, Minister for Social Justice:

- updated members on the Welsh Government's current priorities in this area, including:
 - shared representations to the UK Government and Ofgem
 - Welsh Government's response to the crisis, including an update on take-up of the current Welsh Fuel Support Scheme;
 - focus on improving energy efficiency
 - recent meetings with energy suppliers, following concerns that more people are being driven onto prepayment meters
- took questions from the Group

Bethan Sayed, Campaigns Co-ordinator at Climate Cymru:

- presented on the *Warm This Winter* campaign and its key calls on the Welsh Government (and the UK Government), including for emergency support, affordable energy, and an ambitious energy efficiency programme to support those worst-affected
- took questions from the Group

Cara Holmes, Senior Policy Researcher at Citizens Advice Cymru:

- presented on Citizens Advice Cymru's forthcoming report entitled *Grinding to a halt?* on removing the roadblocks to improving energy efficiency and decarbonisations in private housing in Wales
- took questions from the Group

3. Professional lobbyists, voluntary organisations and charities with whom the Group has met during the preceding year.

Only as detailed above.

Annual Financial Statement.

Date: 5 December 2022

Cross Party Group on Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

Chair: Mark Isherwood MS

Secretariat:

Ben Saltmarsh (NEA Cymru)

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| Group's Expenses. | None. | £0.00 |
| Costs of all goods. | No goods purchased. | £0.00 |
| Benefits received by the group or individual Members from outside bodies. | No benefits received. | £0.00 |
| Any secretariat or other support. | No financial support received. Secretariat provided by NEA Cymru. | £0.00 |
| Services provided to the Group such as hospitality. | | |
| N/A. Both meetings delivered online via Zoom. | | |
| Date | Description and name of provider | Cost |
| | | £0.00 |
| Total cost | | £0.00 |