

Carl Sargeant AC / AM
Y Gweinidog Cyfoeth Naturiol
Minister for Natural Resources



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref SF/CS/2120/15

Alun Ffred Jones AM
Chair of the Environment and Sustainability
Committee
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA

21 July 2015

Dear Alun,

Thank you for your letter of 29 June setting out the conclusions of the Environment and Sustainability Committee's inquiry into fuel poverty and energy efficiency.

I welcome the Committee's response and will keep you updated on any plans we may have to refresh the Fuel Poverty Strategy, on the outcome of the consultation on our new Energy Efficiency Strategy and on progress with *Welsh Government Warm Homes and Resource Efficient Wales (REW)*.

I will also consider the Committee's suggestion that the Welsh Government facilitate an annual forum on actions to tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency in Wales. In response to the Committee's conclusions on data and fuel debt, I am pleased to be able to provide you with following update.

Data

The project to identify gaps in the evidence base for housing conditions, and to develop a business case for investment in fuel poverty and housing conditions data in the medium and long term, is ongoing. I expect a business justification case to be completed and a preferred option for delivering new data to be recommended in the autumn. In addition to the work underway to secure longer term data, I have recently agreed to fund a research project to model existing data sources to produce, in the short term, more up-to-date estimates of fuel poverty levels and the energy efficiency of dwellings. This work is currently being scoped and I am happy to keep the Committee updated as work progresses.

Fuel Debt

Given the importance of ensuring that we lever Energy Companies Obligation (ECO) funding into Wales, my recent meetings with major energy suppliers have focused primarily

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on their ECO investment. I will be holding regular meetings with energy suppliers and will challenge them on what more they can do to support customers who are in debt, what action they are taking to ensure that customers are not switched to pre-payment meters unless it is the most appropriate payment option for the customer, and on what plans they have in place for the roll-out of smart meters in Wales.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'C' followed by a series of loops and a final upward stroke.

Carl Sargeant AC / AM

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