

**Minutes of the Cross-Party Group on Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency**  
**1<sup>st</sup> October 2019**

<b>In attendance</b>			
<b>Mark Isherwood AM (Chair)</b>	Assembly Member	<b>Crispin Jones</b>	Arbed am Byth
<b>Carole Morgan-Jones</b>	NEA Cymru	<b>Ben Sears</b>	WLGA
<b>Ben Saltmarsh</b>	Smart Energy GB	<b>Rob Palmizi</b>	Citizens Advice
<b>Gowan Watkins</b>	Welsh Government	<b>Simon Lannon</b>	Cardiff University
<b>Phil Dawson</b>	E.ON	<b>Liz Lambert</b>	Cardiff Council
<b>Stephen Chamberlain</b>	Welsh Government	<b>Caroline Summers</b>	Melin Homes
<b>Rhian Cook</b>	Melin Homes	<b>Steffan Evans</b>	Bevan Foundation
<b>Juliet Morris</b>	Care & Repair Cymru	<b>Andrew Padmore</b>	Egnida
<b>Isabelle Michelson</b>	Grayling	<b>Ben Coates</b>	Grayling
<b>Jonathan Cosson</b>	Warm Wales	<b>Mike Anderson</b>	Ofgem
<b>Tim Thomas</b>	NRLA	<b>Claire Cunliffe</b>	Oxfam Cymru
<b>Jasmine Jones</b>	Gypsy and Traveller	<b>Rita Singh</b>	Kingspan

<b>Apologies</b>			
<b>Adam Price</b>	Plaid Cymru	<b>Tyler Walsh</b>	Welsh Conservatives
<b>Dawn Shakespeare</b>	UKIFDA		

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Mark Isherwood (MI) welcomed members and stakeholders to the meeting. Carole Morgan-Jones (CMJ) noted the apologies received. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2019 were approved.

MI began by highlighting the Welsh Government’s published update on the Warm Homes Programme and the latest Nest and Arbed reports for 2018-19 which were published in the summer. Since the energy efficiency improvement schemes started 9 years ago, the Welsh Government has invested more than £265 million into the schemes, benefitting 54,800 homes with energy efficiency improvements.

The Nest Scheme for 2018-19 showed funding of £15.9 million has provided 15,606 people with help and support by signposting to a number of third party services. In addition, more than 3,800 homes have benefited from home energy efficiency measures. The first annual report of the Arbed-Am-Byth scheme shows more than £1.2m of Welsh Government funding was provided benefitting 145 homes to improve their energy efficiency.

Also, in July the Decarbonisation of Existing Homes Advisory Group published its report ‘Better Homes, Better Wales, Better World’ making recommendations on how best to

deliver a long-term programme of housing improvements in order to meet the decarbonisation targets. One of the key recommendations was for the Welsh Government to commit to a 30-year residential decarbonisation programme and to prioritise the retrofitting of fuel poor homes and social homes over the next 10 years to EPC Band A.

## **2. Gowan Watkins, Head of the Welsh Housing Condition Programme Welsh Government**

MI welcomed Gowan Watkins (GW) from the Welsh Government who presented on the findings from the Welsh Housing Condition Survey 2017-18 providing updated data about the condition of the housing stock in Wales. The results show that 69% of dwellings in Wales were in the owner-occupied sector in 2017-18, the lowest rate since 1993 and a decrease of 4% points compared with 2008. In contrast, the percentage of privately rented dwellings was at its highest level since 1981 at 13% and the social rented sector at 18%. Wales has the oldest dwelling stock in the UK with over a quarter of all dwellings (26%) built prior to 1919. The average SAP rating for a residential dwelling in Wales was 61, the lowest across the UK, equivalent to an EPC band D.

In terms of fuel poverty levels in Wales the survey showed that in 2018, 155,000 households were living in fuel poverty equivalent to 12% of all households and 19,000 households living in severe fuel poverty. Characteristics of those in fuel poverty suggest that in 2018 the most common household type was single pensioner households (29%) and single person households (22%).

It was, however, households in the private rented sector with the highest proportion of households in fuel poverty. Approximately 20% of all privately rented households were in fuel poverty compared with 11% of owner occupied and 9% of social housing.

Households living in rural areas were more likely to be in fuel poverty. Of all households in rural locations, 14% were fuel poor, compared with 10% of all households living in urban areas.

There was a large incidence of households in fuel poverty amongst those who do not have central heating systems. Among these households, the percentage living in fuel poverty rises to 39%.

## **3. Stephen Chamberlain, Domestic Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty Branch, Welsh Government**

Stephen Chamberlain (SC) outlined the current thinking on the likely content of the Welsh Government's new fuel poverty plan which is due out for consultation shortly. He mentioned that the health conditions pilot is likely to be embedded into the wider Nest fuel poverty scheme. The Wales Audit Office were undertaking a landscape review which will help inform its development.

In terms of targets within the consultation, the Welsh Government wanted meaningful targets, but it is unlikely to be a target to eradicate fuel poverty and will more likely follow the Scottish Government's approach in reducing fuel poverty to an 'acceptable' level.

The definition of fuel poverty is also unlikely to change and will remain using the 10% definition. Consideration was also being given to using a measure of the reduction in kilowatt hour used by the household rather than improving properties to a certain EPC rating.

The Welsh Government wants the plan to focus on a person-centred approach, rather than just improving the energy efficiency of the home. As a result, a key feature of the new plan will be to improve advice and support services for households.

#### **4. Discussion**

Questions were raised about the detail of the data and whether you could access street and property details from the survey. GW mentioned that this can be done through a data access agreement.

MI asked about the cold weather plan, but it was indicated that there would be inclusion of winter preparedness rather than a formal plan.

#### **5. Closing**

MI thanked the speakers for their presentations and stakeholders for attending.

#### **6. Next meeting**

A date for the next meeting of the Cross-Party Group has not been determined and will be circulated in due course.