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Energy Action Scotland Welcomes New Commitment to Eradicating Fuel Poverty

The Scottish Government has responded today (8 March) to the final reports of its two advisory groups on fuel poverty. Last autumn the Scottish Fuel Poverty Strategic Working Group and the Scottish Rural Fuel Poverty Task Force concluded their year-long deliberations and published between them over 100 recommendations for better tackling fuel poverty in Scotland.

The national fuel poverty charity Energy Action Scotland, which sat on both advisory groups, has welcomed the Scottish Government's response and its commitment to on-going support to solve the problem of cold, damp and unaffordable-to-heat homes in Scotland.

In particular, Energy Action Scotland notes the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance's assurance that a new fuel poverty strategy will be set following consultation and that the Scottish Government remains committed to eradicating fuel poverty in Scotland. Importantly, the response states that a new statutory fuel poverty target will be set as part of the Warm Homes Bill due next year. The previous target expired in November 2016.

The report underlines the Government's on-going commitment to making homes in Scotland more energy efficient while recognising that 'eradicating fuel poverty requires more than investment in energy efficiency'.

There is also recognition that fuel poverty impacts on various aspects of life including health and income and so involves various government departments such as housing, the economy, jobs and skills, and social security. It is particularly welcome therefore that the Scottish Government will hold a summit of Ministers this autumn to discuss the development of the new fuel poverty strategy. Energy Action Scotland hopes that this cross-Ministerial input to tackling fuel poverty would then become a regular occurrence.

Norman Kerr, Director of Energy Action Scotland said:

"The Scottish Government has stated in its response that it remains committed to eradicating fuel poverty and this is to be welcomed. Its pledge to tackle the range of causes of fuel poverty is an important factor, as is the recognition of the cross-cutting nature of fuel poverty, for example it involves action on housing and incomes and can impact on the health of those affected.

"Making sure that assistance to help people get out of fuel poverty is delivered across the country is important and this is recognised in the new report. The Scottish Government's plans to pilot new ways of helping rural areas will be looked at carefully, as households in rural areas have generally experienced more barriers to date in tackling fuel poverty.

“This is a set of plans that will need to be well-monitored and will need a corresponding budget over time in order to deliver measures that can make a real difference to Scottish households.”

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Background information:

1. Energy Action Scotland is the national charity which campaigns to end fuel poverty and works to promote warm, dry homes for all. Website: www.eas.org.uk
2. There are currently around 748,000 households (30.7 per cent) in fuel poverty in Scotland (source: Scottish House Condition Survey).
3. Fuel poverty is the inability to afford adequate warmth in the home, defined as needing to pay more than 10 per cent of income on energy costs.
4. The main causes of fuel poverty are poor energy efficiency of the home, high domestic fuel prices and low household income.
5. See the Scottish Government press release at: <http://news.gov.scot/news/action-on-fuel-poverty-1> and its full response at: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/03/1009>