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24 March 2026

Rt Hon John Swinney MSP
First Minister of Scotland
Scottish Government
St Andrews House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Dear First Minister,

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has once again driven up global energy prices, creating a renewed crisis for households across Scotland. Users of heating oil and LPG are already feeling the impact, and from July onwards average gas and electricity bills may rise above £2,000, with the risk of further increases into Winter 2026/27. For many—particularly those in rural and island communities, disabled people, families with young children and people with long-term or terminal conditions—these average figures vastly understate the real costs required to live safely, warmly, and with dignity.

Scotland is already facing a situation in which one in three people cannot afford essential heat and power. During the previous peak in 2022/23, even with government support, Scotland recorded its highest level of winter deaths in two decades, and research by Age Scotland found that in December 2023 almost 900 people over the age of 50 were admitted to hospital with symptoms consistent with hypothermia.

For those on low incomes or with unavoidably high energy needs, this is not a new crisis, it is a continuation of hardship that began in 2022. Energy prices have remained around 50% higher than in 2021, and energy debt has climbed to more than £4.5 billion across Great Britain, with households in Scotland carrying over £500 million of this burden. Frontline advice services report that hundreds of thousands of households are now struggling with more than £2,000 of energy arrears.

We welcome recent support for low income households using heating oil and alternative fuels, and the intention to introduce regulation. However, regulation will take time, and thousands remain unprotected—particularly households whose energy is supplied by a third party such as private landlords, park home owners, and temporary accommodation providers.

Charities and community organisations are already responding to the consequences of high prices and will face further pressure if costs rise again. Without urgent action, we risk an increase in dangerous behaviors, from energy meter & supply tampering to people simply going without heat, as people struggle to cope, and additional strain on hospitals, social care, and emergency services. With Scottish Parliament elections approaching, and the time required to form a new Government, delays in planning would put lives at risk.




ENERGY ACTION SCOTLAND.

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It is essential that preparations begin now for all scenarios that may develop over summer and into the winter.

Our asks on behalf of our members, our supporting colleagues and those in need:

1. Begin immediate preparation of a comprehensive Winter 2026/27 Plan, ensuring support reaches those most at risk, including disabled people, those with long-term conditions, and households outside traditional support routes.
2. Fully involve the voluntary and community sector in developing this plan.
3. Provide support to the wider advice and support sectors, which continue to shoulder the administrative and operational burden of national schemes without dedicated funding.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Frazer Scott".

Frazer Scott
Chief Executive Officer

Supported by:

- The ALLIANCE, Lucy Mulvagh, Director of Policy, Research and Impact
- Citizens Advice Scotland, Derek Mitchell, CEO
- End Fuel Poverty Coalition, Simon Francis, Co-Ordinator
- Existing Homes Alliance Scotland, Lori McElroy, Chair
- Fuel Bank Foundation, Siobhan Doyle, Head of Impact
- One Parent Families Scotland, Satwat Rehman, CEO
- Poverty Alliance, Peter Kelly, CEO
- Save the Children, Claire Telfer, Head of Scotland
- Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Richard Meade, CEO

References:

1. <https://www.cornwall-insight.com/predictions-and-insights-into-the-default-tariff-cap/>
2. <https://www.agescotland.org.uk/news/1293-charity-publishes-shocking-hypothermia-figures>
3. National Records of Scotland, [Winter Mortality in Scotland 2022/23](#), published October 2023



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