



**Scottish Local Government Election 2017
- Special Report on Fuel Poverty -**

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The Scottish Government is preparing to produce a new fuel poverty strategy and to reset the target to eradicate fuel poverty in Scotland. It is Energy Action Scotland's view that, just as under the previous statutory duty which expired in 2016, local authorities must have a key role in the new strategy and make significant contributions that are integral to the aim of fuel poverty eradication.

As the national charity with the mission to eradicate fuel poverty, Energy Action Scotland asked the 5 main Scottish political parties to outline their plans for tackling fuel poverty within a local government context. In particular, each party was invited to respond to the questions below and their responses form this report.

1. The drivers of and the consequences of fuel poverty fall across several departmental responsibilities. How would your party achieve a co-ordinated approach to implementing a solution to fuel poverty at local authority level in relation to the following?
 - a. The integration of Health and Social Care.
 - b. Improving domestic energy efficiency, dealing with environmental concerns and supporting the local economy.
 - c. Tackling poverty and the poverty premium.
2. How would your party tackle the rising costs of energy for consumers in both the regulated (gas and electricity) and non-regulated (oil, LPG and solid fuel) markets?
3. What are your party's views on the expanding role of local authorities in terms of regulation and consumer protection eg in relation to private housing quality, provision of energy services and the installation of energy efficiency measures?
4. Overall within the remit of local authorities, what else would your party do to contribute to the goal to end fuel poverty in Scotland?

Scottish Conservative Party

1. The drivers of and the consequences of fuel poverty fall across several departmental responsibilities. How would your party achieve a co-ordinated approach to implementing a solution to fuel poverty at local authority level in relation to the following?

- a. The integration of Health and Social Care.**
- b. Improving domestic energy efficiency, dealing with environmental concerns and supporting the local economy.**
- c. Tackling poverty and the poverty premium.**

Fuel poverty levels in Scotland, especially in rural areas, are of serious concern. Many of our elderly live in some of the least energy efficient homes and struggle to heat their homes properly. Investing in energy efficiency is the most straightforward way of tackling these unacceptable levels of fuel poverty. With clear knock-on effects on physical and mental health, it seems obvious to us that this should be a policy priority for all levels of government.

We have been making the case for an additional £1 billion to be invested in energy efficiency measures during the course of the Parliament. We would do this through a truly national infrastructure project, bringing together all levels of government, the private and the third sectors, that would create thousands of jobs, with much of the benefit in some of the most remote parts of Scotland.

In terms of social care, we know that councils have complained of a serious underfunding of the new Health and Social Care Partnerships. With an ageing population, this simply must not continue. Partnerships must work to ensure that people stay in hospital for as little time as possible and those who need help to return home are given it. This is particularly true for those at the end of their lives.

Of course, job creation is central to alleviating poverty too and that's why we have set out a range of policies in our local manifesto that are centred on locally-driven economic growth. Our councils should become engines of growth in Scotland, with additional powers over planning, taxation and capital spend.

Local authorities are often the first point of contact for citizens and they should therefore provide easily accessible and clear advice on energy efficiency measures, energy bills or emergency help that is available.

2. How would your party tackle the rising costs of energy for consumers in both the regulated (gas and electricity) and non-regulated (oil, LPG and solid fuel) markets?

Hard to treat properties should not be left behind and we do recognise that some Councillors have shied away from this problem. As mentioned above, Scottish Conservatives are willing to engage with the third and private sectors to make sure that innovative approaches are considered and, when appropriate, adopted. We also need to ensure that people living in fuel poverty are fully aware of the schemes available to them – for example Energy Assistance Packages specifically targeting hard to treat properties.

3. What are your party's views on the expanding role of local authorities in terms of regulation and consumer protection e.g. in relation to private housing quality, provision of energy services and the installation of energy efficiency measures?

Local authorities do now have further regulatory powers over housing, but it would be up to local Scottish Conservative groups to decide on their use. As mentioned above, local

authorities should be delivery partners in an energy efficiency national infrastructure project that would make a real difference to the levels of fuel poverty in Scotland. We should aim to have no person living in a hard to heat home by the end of the next decade.

4. Overall within the remit of local authorities, what else would your party do to contribute to the goal to end fuel poverty in Scotland?

The approach to tackling fuel poverty has to be twofold – it requires lowering the amount of income spent on energy and it involves increasing household incomes. On the latter, we believe local authorities need to become Scotland’s engines of growth and have a real stake in job creation in their local areas. To that end, we have centred our entire local election manifesto on locally-driven economic growth and made a range of proposals to give councils more powers over planning, taxation and capital spend. On the former, we are adamant that a step change in energy efficiency levels across Scotland would be a transformative change to fuel poverty. Local authorities have to be at the heart of this process and work with central government on the national infrastructure project.

Scottish Green Party

1. The drivers of and the consequences of fuel poverty fall across several departmental responsibilities. How would your party achieve a co-ordinated approach to implementing a solution to fuel poverty at local authority level in relation to the following?

a. The integration of Health and Social Care.

b. Improving domestic energy efficiency, dealing with environmental concerns and supporting the local economy.

c. Tackling poverty and the poverty premium.

a. Fuel poverty costs the NHS in Scotland up to £80 million per year. This, therefore, should be a key health priority as cold homes not only affect physical health but mental health too. That is why Greens support the roll out of health-related fuel poverty schemes in Scotland as recently promoted by a key report by Shelter Scotland and Energy Action Scotland. The integration of health and social care should be an opportunity for fuel poverty to be addressed via schemes like this through, for example, bespoke services that can provide advice and advocacy to householders. Fuel poverty is an issue that impacts on people of all ages – both in rural and urban communities. Therefore we need to integrate services across our statutory and voluntary sectors to fully address this scourge on society.

b. We need to think long term about how we approach this issue, as to date, this has been riddled by myopic short-termism by policymakers. Consequently Greens recognise the importance of the direct and indirect benefits of addressing fuel poverty through improving domestic energy efficiency. In a financial sense, we can boost the local economy by creating up to 9,000 jobs in Scotland in the delivery of energy efficiency measures – whether that be through surveying, manufacturing or constructing sustainable materials. Other employment opportunities can also be created through delivering advice services to local communities. Nevertheless, at the heart of incentivising this growing sector, we must be aware of our environmental impact and ambitions if we are to significantly reduce our carbon emissions and achieve the green credentials that we are seeking to achieve.

c. No one should have to pay to be poor but unfortunately that is a daily reality for too many people in Scotland. It is unacceptable that those in the lowest income groups should be paying the most for their energy supplies, such as through electricity top-up cards. It is estimated that prepayment customers pay up to £400 per year on their bills more than those on direct debit schemes. The implications of this for householders means that they are not accessing the best fuel deals nor are they able to allocate their budgets to other household costs, such as food, telecommunications or leisure opportunities. Although prepayment systems are useful for people budgeting their weekly or monthly household incomes, Greens support choice for consumers, but that should not mean that they have to pay premium rates for this. In rural areas, where householders rely on LPG or domestic oil to fuel their homes, the Greens support buying clubs so that communities can collectively purchase fuel at a time when prices reflect less demand.

2. How would your party tackle the rising costs of energy for consumers in both the regulated (gas and electricity) and non-regulated (oil, LPG and solid fuel) markets?

The high price of energy is pushing too many people into poverty. Greens support publicly-owned energy companies which can supply cheaper energy. Aberdeen City's public energy company halved energy bills for council tenants and has been churning out low carbon energy for over a decade. Moneysavingexpert.com judge Nottingham City's Robin Hood Energy Company to be more than £200 cheaper than the average Big Six fuel bill. That sort

of action can make a massive difference to household budgets. Glasgow and Edinburgh are in the process of setting up their own companies with Green councillors on the board. In rural areas with a greater need for oil, LPG and solid fuels, Council-run energy companies should be aiming to supply cheaper forms of this fuel too, while improving energy efficiency.

3. What are your party's views on the expanding role of local authorities in terms of regulation and consumer protection eg in relation to private housing quality, provision of energy services and the installation of energy efficiency measures?

Councils are already key to sorting out Scotland's leaky homes. Almost half of Scotland's homes fail basic standards, so we know there is a massive backlog of repairs. But commissioning work is difficult and expensive. 'Not for profit' repairs companies run by local authorities, housing associations and voluntary agencies could take a lead in commissioning work and giving people a fair way to pay - for example, with grants for low income households, interest-free loans, or options to defer paying repair costs until the property is sold. Minimum standards of energy efficiency in the private sector will be essential to bringing Scotland's housing stock up to standard to lower emissions and fuel poverty.

4. Overall within the remit of local authorities, what else would your party do to contribute to the goal to end fuel poverty in Scotland?

Tackling plain old poverty itself is also essential to ending fuel poverty. Green MSP Alison Johnstone won agreement from the Scottish Government to roll out Healthier, Wealthier Children – a highly successful Glasgow NHS project where midwives and health visitors helped families get the benefits they were eligible for but not claiming. Council and NHS trusts across Scotland should all have so called 'income maximisation' projects to help tackle child poverty.

Land use plans which prioritise new housing that is affordable, low-carbon, built on brownfield sites and connected to local services like schools and shops are important. Homes like this help create communities and keep people out of poverty.

At other levels, Greens at Holyrood successfully got energy efficiency marked as a national infrastructure priority. Scottish Government have been slow to put the money behind it that is needed so we will continue to push for investment in area-based schemes to improve homes and bring people out of fuel poverty. Staying in the European Union is also important as it lets us access European funding streams on energy efficiency.

Scottish Labour Party

1. The drivers of and the consequences of fuel poverty fall across several departmental responsibilities. How would your party achieve a co-ordinated approach to implementing a solution to fuel poverty at local authority level in relation to the following?

a. The integration of Health and Social Care.

b. Improving domestic energy efficiency, dealing with environmental concerns and supporting the local economy.

c. Tackling poverty and the poverty premium.

a. Labour councils have been working closely with local health boards to integrate NHS care with their own social care services. However, financial cuts are making it harder – since Labour left office the proportion of people aged 65 and over receiving home care has been cut by 12%. Labour believe it is right to invest in the social care necessary to deliver what people need and we would use the powers of the Scottish Parliament to stop the SNP Government's cuts to local services. Scottish Labour want to guarantee a social care package being in place within a week of an assessment being done, a policy that would save our NHS thousands of pounds by ensuring people well enough to go home are able to do so. These people need to be confident in the knowledge that their needs will be met, which is why we have forced the government to accept that the fuel poverty eradication target, which it missed, must be re-established and why we would introduce a Warm Homes Act to make sure all of Scotland's homes are properly insulated and energy efficient. It would work in conjunction with local councils to ensure that homes are being insulated. We support Energy Action Scotland's call for proactive measures to identify vulnerable households and their needs to enable better planning and to deliver more information and advice on fuel poverty, in a more holistic way.

b. Environmental policy must be looked at in its entirety and ensure just, affordable outcomes for everyone. Scottish Labour supports the development of waste minimisation and good strategies to 'reduce, reuse and recycle', creating opportunities for local jobs as well as meeting environmental targets. Scottish Labour also aspires to generate 50% of Scotland's electricity, heat and transport demand through renewables by 2030. Investment in the renewables sector will not only create clean energy but jobs in the supply chain for building and supporting new energy infrastructures.

Scottish Labour is also in favour of scrapping the hated Council Tax. Tourism taxes, devolution of the Crown Estate and a land value tax could unlock over £150 million for councils, should they choose to use them, and spur on economic growth, creating jobs and improving services.

c. Scottish Labour has consistently pledged to use the powers of our Parliament to help the most vulnerable. We have secured a statutory duty on the new social security agency to maximise incomes and increase social security uptake and our proposals to top up Child Benefit would lift 30,000 children out of poverty by 2021. We have proposed using new tax powers to ensure the top of society pay their fair share. The SNP Government refuse to do so and are unable to make different choices from the Tories on areas like PIP [Personal Independence Payment]. Under our proposed alternative to Council Tax, 80% of household across Scotland will pay less than they do today.

Labour councils have led the way in tackling the poverty premium that exists in the energy market. North Lanarkshire Council spearheaded the Collective Switching initiative, which helps groups of residents join together to get cheaper fuel bills. Scottish Labour also want to see more of Scotland's councils become truly co-operative. There are opportunities for

councils to develop renewable district heating systems in partnerships with communities and social housing providers to use co-operative models.

2. How would your party tackle the rising costs of energy for consumers in both the regulated (gas and electricity) and non-regulated (oil, LPG and solid fuel) markets?

Scottish Labour believes that energy prices are out of control. This is a reserved issue for Westminster but we recognise that we must campaign against excessive energy prices and for simpler ways for consumers to find the cheapest energy. We are in favour of a cap on Standard Variable Tariffs as was recommended last year in the interim report by the Competition and Markets Authority.

Scottish Labour councils are leading the way in sustainable, affordable energy. Glasgow Labour will create a city energy company to reduce energy bills and tackle fuel poverty. This will bring together the city's renewables efforts and tackle fuel poverty by reducing energy bills for households across the city.

3. What are your party's views on the expanding role of local authorities in terms of regulation and consumer protection e.g. in relation to private housing quality, provision of energy services and the installation of energy efficiency measures?

Scottish Labour would regulate private rents – capping rent increases so rogue landlords can't rip-off their tenants – and will consult on introducing a charter to drive up standards in the private rented sector. It will be Labour councils across Scotland who will make use of rent control zones to protect tenants from unscrupulous landlords. Scottish Labour is also calling for laws to ensure landlords keep their properties warm, to make sure they are insulated and have heating systems that meet energy efficient standards.

4. Overall within the remit of local authorities, what else would your party do to contribute to the goal to end fuel poverty in Scotland?

We believe that everyone deserves a safe, warm, comfortable home. For Scottish Labour this is a matter of social justice. Building affordable, well-insulated homes will be key to ending fuel poverty and we want a national house-building plan setting out how government and councils can work together to tackle Scotland's housing crisis. Labour would build 45,000 new homes for rent by councils, housing associations and co-operatives – built in the highest standard of insulation. The Warm Homes Act would deliver the changes in planning and building regulations to tackle fuel poverty. In recent months Labour councils have announced they will build 1,000 homes in West Lothian and 16,000 homes in Edinburgh, while Aberdeen are considering plans to build 2,000 new council homes.

There are currently thousands of hectares of vacant and derelict land in Scotland. Scottish Labour is the only party committed to ensuring councils have the ability to create a land value tax, as well as devolving the Crown Estate surplus to local authorities. We are committed to delivering powers that would allow councils to compel the sale of derelict and brownfield land for early development and believe in a regulatory framework, which allows land being held by developers reluctant to build in a depressed housing market, to be developed.

In taking action we will seek to ensure the perspective of the person experiencing fuel poverty is at the centre of policy making and we will work in partnership with all stakeholders to ensure that we can in future meet our ambition to end fuel poverty in Scotland.

Scottish Liberal Democrat Party

1. The drivers of and the consequences of fuel poverty fall across several departmental responsibilities. How would your party achieve a co-ordinated approach to implementing a solution to fuel poverty at local authority level in relation to the following?

a. The integration of Health and Social Care.

b. Improving domestic energy efficiency, dealing with environmental concerns and supporting the local economy.

c. Tackling poverty and the poverty premium.

We need to embed a strong commitment to tackling fuel poverty across local and central government and their respective departments.

The integration of health and social care presents an opportunity to improve the means of identifying those in fuel poverty and better target preventative spending. It will hardly aid someone's recovery if they return home from hospital to a freezing cold home that they will find it impossible to ever adequately heat. There is sense in health and social care workers, for example in assessing whether people are ready to be cared for in the community, helping spot the signs of fuel poverty.

Scottish Liberal Democrats are also in favour of extending the rights of GPs to social prescribing, including to home insulation if they judge it will help a patient's health and wellbeing. The integration of health and social care could help ease action in this area.

We would champion local economic development, making full use of councils' economic clout and encourage better partnerships with local businesses.

Scottish Liberal Democrats would also use councils' negotiating and initiating clout to secure cheaper energy prices for local citizens by acting as either purchasers or generators of energy, as part of a programme to tackle the poverty premium that often means that people on the lowest incomes pay more for basic services.

2. How would your party tackle the rising costs of energy for consumers in both the regulated (gas and electricity) and non-regulated (oil, LPG and solid fuel) markets?

The Scottish Liberal Democrats have proposed giving local authorities a full power of general competence, allowing them to meet the needs of the people they serve. We would also give powers to local authorities to create a Municipal Energy Strategy to help them support, through planning and investment, the development of renewable heat networks.

In doing so, we would encourage local authorities to use their extended powers of competence and their Municipal Energy Strategy to investigate using their own renewable energy generation to provide low tariffs for those in fuel poverty.

3. What are your party's views on the expanding role of local authorities in terms of regulation and consumer protection e.g. in relation to private housing quality, provision of energy services and the installation of energy efficiency measures?

Local councils should take an effective role in protecting consumers, helping cut family living costs and building opportunity.

We support new social housing incorporating renewable energy systems as a condition of funding support from public money. We also support phasing in a new regulation to make sure all newly-let properties achieve energy rating C in order to reflect that landlords have the capital asset and resources to make the investment, whereas tenants do not. Local authorities would help ensure that this is realised.

With fifteen per cent of households not on the grid, many are reliant on alternatives such as LPG. The lack of statutory protection in such areas necessitates trading standards to provide oversight. That is why we would also ensure that trading standards are equipped to do their job, following persistent warnings that they have become stretched and that councils don't have the staff or skills they need to protect the public from unscrupulous practices and individuals.

4. Overall within the remit of local authorities, what else would your party do to contribute to the goal to end fuel poverty in Scotland?

Liberal Democrat councillors will be ambitious in tackling fuel poverty in their areas.

Liberal Democrats support the concept of parity of esteem between local and central government. We will continue to champion the decentralisation of as much power as possible to local councils and communities so that they have the means and the flexibility to tackle issues, such as fuel poverty, in the way that is most appropriate for their area. This will aid in rural proofing fuel poverty programmes and ensure that those areas that have been left behind – catch-up zones - have the tools they need to take concerted action.

Restoring councils' control over the Council Tax and business rates would also help them to develop longer-term plans and invest for the future as they see fit, including in areas such as fuel poverty.

We would also support the building throughout Scotland of thousands more socially rented warm homes, using new funding methods such as pension funds and developers' assets where possible.

Scottish National Party

1. The drivers of and the consequences of fuel poverty fall across several departmental responsibilities. How would your party achieve a co-ordinated approach to implementing a solution to fuel poverty at local authority level in relation to the following?

a. The integration of Health and Social Care.

b. Improving domestic energy efficiency, dealing with environmental concerns and supporting the local economy.

c. Tackling poverty and the poverty premium.

Fuel poverty is entirely unacceptable in an energy rich country like Scotland. SNP councillors will work tirelessly to use the powers at local government level to combat fuel poverty and end the poverty premium faced by too many people in Scotland. We will support services supporting financial inclusion and income maximisation; will ensure use of the new online landlord registration system which will free up time to ensure landlords are registered and complying with registration requirements; and SNP councillors on integration authorities will work in partnership to enhance wellbeing, including on issues of fuel poverty. SNP councillors will highlight the 50% business rates relief being offered by the Scottish Government for stand-alone district heating schemes.

Since 2008 over one million energy efficiency measures have been installed in almost one million households across Scotland, which has helped make homes warmer. SNP councillors will continue to promote the range of options available to people to help make their homes more energy efficient, easier to heat, and reduce bills.

The SNP Scottish Government is also investing in making more properties and buildings energy efficient and SNP councillors will ensure their councils benefit from Scottish government funding to help the energy efficiency of community buildings and domestic and commercial properties. The Scottish Government is investing over £1 billion over ten years to 2021 in energy efficiency. As well as improving both domestic and public buildings, this funding will improve the health and wellbeing of people and support local jobs and economies, by ultimately supporting around 4,000 jobs a year.

2. How would your party tackle the rising costs of energy for consumers in both the regulated (gas and electricity) and non-regulated (oil, LPG and solid fuel) markets?

It is clear that there is a lack of competition in the UK energy market and that fails consumers, leaving hard-pressed families paying too much for their energy. Change is long overdue and the SNP will push for the energy companies to comply with the Competition and Markets Authority's recommendations to increase competition which has the potential to save consumers up to £300 a year. We will work to ensure those who are off-grid and rely on heating sources other than mains gas are the primary focus of efforts to improve home insulation and extend the use of alternative low carbon heating technologies.

3. What are your party's views on the expanding role of local authorities in terms of regulation and consumer protection e.g. in relation to private housing quality, provision of energy services and the installation of energy efficiency measures?

Councils are an important partner for tackling fuel poverty and ensuring energy efficiency across the domestic, public and private sector. SNP councillors will ensure their council makes full use of the Scottish Government funding available to support community and local energy projects; £35 million has been made available since 2013. SNP councillors will also

work in partnership with their local communities and the Scottish Government to increase the uptake of shared ownership in renewable energy projects.

4. Overall within the remit of local authorities, what else would your party do to contribute to the goal to end fuel poverty in Scotland?

As well as what we have outlined above, SNP councillors will be committed to helping the SNP Scottish Government achieve their goal of eradicating fuel poverty and their vision of a modern, integrated, low carbon energy system that delivers reliable supplies of energy at affordable prices to consumers in all parts of Scotland by 2050.



This report was produced by Energy Action Scotland.

Energy Action Scotland is the national charity working for warm, dry homes.

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