

**Cross Party Group on Fuel Poverty**  
**Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2018, 12pm**  
**Conference Room B, Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay CF10 4PZ**  
**Minutes**

**In attendance**

Mark Isherwood AM	
Mike Hedges AM	
Carole Morgan-Jones	NEA
Bethan Proctor	NEA
Ben Saltmarsh	NEA
Rhiannon Spence	NEA
Jonathan Oates	WG
Kristy Roberts-Medcraft	WG
Caroline Summers	Melin Homes
Liz Lambert	Cardiff Council
Shea Buckland-Jones	IWA
Simon Lannon	Welsh School of Architecture
Jocelle Lovell	Wales Cooperative Centre
Jonathan Cosson	Warm Wales
Nigel Winnan	WWU
Nick Speed	Centrica
Ryland Doyle	Office of Mike Hedges AM
Ella Maxwell	Ofgem
Elizabeth Williams	Office of Vicki Howells AM
Robin Lewis	Office of Vicki Howells AM

**Apologies**

Simon Thomas AM	
Lynn Cadwallader	One Voice Wales
Andy Davies	Speakeasy
Andrew Regan	Citizens Advice
Phillip Dawson	E-On
Crispin Jones	E-On
David Bolton	Melin Homes
Alison Cawley	Melin Homes
Mari Arthur	Cynnal Cymru
Ross Kirwan	British Gas

**1. Welcome**

Mark Isherwood AM welcomed attendees and explained this session would cover the Welsh Government's Warm Homes programme. Mark mentioned that there would be a one minute silence at 1pm in remembrance of the Manchester terrorist attack last year. Stakeholders attending introduced themselves, and Carole Morgan-Jones cited the apologies. The minutes of the previous meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2017 were

approved. No matters arising. Mark outlined some recent developments including his short debate in February on fuel poverty, and NEA's response to the [locally owned renewable energy consultation](#).

## **2. Carole Morgan-Jones (CM-J): Welsh Government's Warm Homes Programme**

Carole gave an outline of the Nest and Arbed schemes, with funding of £104m being invested by the Welsh Government in its Warm Homes Programme over a 4 year period from 2017-2021 which will assist up to 25,000 low income households in Wales.

The new Nest scheme contract, which was awarded to British Gas, started on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018. Eligibility for free energy efficiency measures includes those who live in a privately owned or privately rented property which is energy inefficient, and they, or someone they live with, is in receipt of a qualifying Means Tested Benefit (MTB). A pilot to test the customer journey for customers who are not in receipt of a MTB but who are on a low income and suffer from a respiratory or circulatory condition has been extended until March 2019 to allow for further in depth testing of the referral routes and to gather a full year of evidence that allows for seasonal health variations.

The contract for the complementary area based fuel poverty scheme Arbed was recently awarded to a joint venture between Everwarm and the Energy Saving Trust with funding of approximately £55m over 3 years. The Arbed scheme focuses on improving the energy efficiency of homes in some of the most deprived areas in Wales.

Carole mentioned the Welsh Government's decarbonisation targets, and stated that major upscaling of energy efficiency retrofit works on existing homes is needed. NEA is calling for a new strategy to tackle fuel poverty, and a joined up approach from both the UK and Welsh Government.

## **3. Questions to Welsh Government Officials**

Ryland Doyle raised a question: With regard to Arbed who would be deciding the areas to be targeted ie the Welsh Government or Local Authorities? And what will happen after March 2019 in regard to EU funding? In response Jonathan Oates (JO) stated that the previous Arbed scheme had geographical inequalities because they came via local authority referrals which depended on the nature of the bids, which meant that some households living in fuel poverty were losing out. The new scheme will lift the burden away from local authorities but local authorities will still be able to identify fuel poor areas through their datasets. Funding could not be predicted once the UK leaves the EU. He recognised that additional mechanisms were also needed to tackle fuel poverty.

Nigel Winnan stated that Wales and West Utilities promote the Nest and Arbed programmes to their customers. Previously 450 gas connections were provided a year, but this number has decreased to 150 per annum.

A question was asked about the number of calls to the Nest advice line and Kristy Roberts-Medcraft (KR-M) stated that approximately 15,000 calls are made per year to the advice line but only a small proportion of these will progress through to a whole house assessment.

Nick Speed mentioned that thought should be given to how the Energy Company Obligation funding is working for Wales and consideration given to the funding being ring-fenced for Wales in order to support the Welsh Government's Warm Homes Programme. In response JO mentioned that this has been raised in consultations and that the Welsh Government liaise regularly with the UK Government to put across Welsh views.

Jo Lovell stated that some tenants do not want to engage with their landlord to request their approval to access Nest help, and Mike Hedges stated that often tenants are anxious that the landlord will increase the rent if energy efficiency changes are made to the property. In response KR-M stated that a landlord must be registered with Rent Smart Wales in order to receive household improvements via Nest. The tenants must have resided in the property for a minimum of 6 months prior to the application and still be resided in the property 6 months post the improvements. Nest also refers cases to the local authority under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

Shea Buckland-Jones raised a question about the Swansea Bay City Region deal, stating that it will need to improve the energy efficiency of 60% of domestic properties in order to reach decarbonising targets. How do we reach decarbonising targets with the current investment levels? In response JO stated that funding would need to come from a range of sources including the Welsh Government as well as investment from private investors. A whole range of options are being discussed but there is no final solution at the moment. A Working Group has been established within the Welsh Government looking at the decarbonisation of existing homes and which will consider and explore the different options available.

Mark Isherwood asked about how older properties were being helped through the Nest scheme particularly hard to treat properties. In response JO stated that the aim of Nest is to improve as many households as possible to reach an EPC rating to Band D.

#### **4. Closing**

There was general support for the scheme all round. CM-J suggested a separate working group could be established to look specifically at ECO funding.

Suggestions for topics for the next CPG meeting included research by Citizens Advice on the excessive profits of the energy network companies. MI also suggested looking at the health aspects of fuel poverty. The topic would be confirmed following discussions with MI and Assembly Members on the CPG.

Date of next meeting: **26<sup>th</sup> September 2018. Conference Room C&D, Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay.**