

Energy Bill lobbying – what we're calling for



Friends of the Earth

1) Local councils and action on climate change

Trailblazing councils have shown that coordinated action in our communities – for greener travel, clean energy and energy efficiency – works. It boosts emissions cuts, saves money and ensures that tackling climate change is good for local people as well as the planet.

The Government says this council action is 'pivotal' to meeting UK Climate Change Act targets. But a step-change in action is needed to ensure every council does its bit.

Councils led by all political parties, businesses such as B&Q and the Federation of Small Businesses, and green groups are asking MPs to strengthen the Government's Energy Bill to:

- **Create clarity:** Ministers should ask the independent Committee on Climate Change to advise on what councils need to do in their patch to help meet UK Climate Change Act targets
- **Ensure local climate action is a priority:** councils should have a duty to draw up local climate change plans – showing how green policies will be rolled out in line with the expert advice

Please ask your MP to add their name to amendments NC1 and NC2 that have been tabled for debate at the Committee Stage of the Energy Bill.

For more information see: www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/energy_bill_council_action.pdf

2) Action on cold rented homes

The private rented sector has the highest rates of fuel poverty and the worst maintained, least energy efficient homes. Over forty percent of those living in the coldest rented homes are in fuel poverty.

The Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change Chris Huhne has announced changes to the Energy Bill to include a new law introducing a minimum energy efficiency standard for homes rented from a landlord or lettings agency from 2018.

He said that it will become illegal to let private rented homes with the worst energy efficiency ratings of F and G. This could lift 150,000 households out of fuel poverty, save tenants in cold homes £488 in energy bills on average and cut almost 2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

We are pleased that the Government has made it clear that renting out dangerously cold and draughty homes is unacceptable - landlords will have to improve their properties or face prosecution. However, 2018 is far too long to wait and there are some significant loopholes in the legislation.

If your MP signed EDM 653 calling for a minimum standard of energy efficiency for private rented homes from 2016 then please thank them – find out here: www.parliament.uk/edm/2010-11/653

Chris Huhne's announcement is welcome. This new law could be a bold and significant step forward, but there are still important improvements that need to be made if it is going to be effective:

- The minimum standard should not wait until 2018 to go live as this is two years after the legal target to end fuel poverty and will unacceptably delay all the benefits to tenants, taxpayers and the environment. The independent Committee on Climate Change have said 2018 is too slow.
- The law should also apply to letting agents rather than just landlords and also make it an offence to market a sub-standard property to let.

- When cold, rented properties are improved they must be brought up to the minimum standard rather than just required to take up the Green Deal
- The Government should include powers to give proper legal protection from eviction to tenants demanding energy efficiency measures from landlords.

In addition, the Government should look at how it can encourage landlords to act early to help households facing fuel poverty this winter with an increased tax break for energy efficiency measures.

For more information and statistics, see our briefing for MPs:
www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefing_notes/private_rented_homes.pdf

3) Ensuring the Government has an energy efficiency strategy, not just the Green Deal

The Green Deal is a welcome development but it won't work for poorer households and those homes that need more expensive energy efficiency measures. It definitely isn't a panacea and will only deliver what the market decides.

The Government has proposed an Energy Company Obligation (ECO) to help those households the Green Deal won't work for.

Businesses and campaigners are both concerned that we have almost no detail about what these two policies will achieve. Some big claims have been made by ministers but with no firm figures. This isn't good enough. We can't sit back and wait to see what happens and businesses need certainty so they can plan and invest.

The Government needs a strategy to ensure they have policies that add up to the change we need to see – a nationwide refit of the UK's homes. The Warm Homes Amendment will ensure that the Government produces a plan with policies which are sufficient to meet climate and fuel poverty targets.

For more information and statistics, see our briefing:
www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefing_notes/warm_homes_amendment.pdf

What next?

If you can, please:

1. Meet your MP

Arrange to meet your MP to discuss the points above.
 You can arrange a date with their office: **020 7219 3000**

2. Phone your MP

Alternatively, phoning your MP's office has a big impact.
 It's easier than you might think – and we've got a short film to show you how:
www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press_for_change/energy_bill_call_30857.html

3. Write to your MP

Or, write to your MP. Personalised letters have a much bigger impact than model communications. This is a guide to the message you might want to send:
www.foe.co.uk/resource/action_guides/mp_letter_lcb.pdf