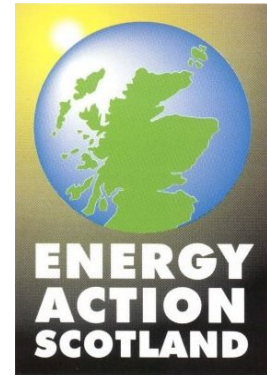


Energy Action Scotland (EAS) proposals for a proactive and reactive approach to tackling fuel poverty and energy efficiency in Scotland



Background

The Scottish Government currently has two, and arguably disparate, fuel poverty and energy efficiency programmes, the Energy Assistance Package (EAP) and the Home Insulation Scheme (HIS). These programmes, while very worthy in their own right, are in some respects working at odds with each other. There is a debate about which approach works better, area based and working door to door or else an individual approach for those who come forward seeking help and who live in the worst homes. Pouring all resources into one at the expense of the other will certainly leave one section of the community without help. It will potentially expose them to the risk of fuel poverty and the poor health associated with living in energy inefficient homes. Funding both a reactive scheme and a proactive area based scheme without any real joining of the programmes limits the impact that either can make.

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So what is the answer?

When the Scottish Fuel Poverty Forum first started to formulate its ideas for a new and fresh fuel poverty programme, EAS proposed the need for a national scheme delivered at a regional level. It would bring economies of scale, new technologies for hard to treat/expensive to treat homes and be able to react to local conditions and needs. EAS's idea was to have five regional delivery centres with a control hub, very much as exists now with the EAP, but with a further local area based programme. Each of the five regional delivery centres would have one or more area based programmes and would work closely with the local authorities and other housing providers in the area.

This joint approach would undoubtedly meet the dual aims of fuel poverty eradication and energy saving/carbon reduction.

Where to start and where to finish?

It would be essential to update the existing fuel poverty map of Scotland, but in the context of the five regional EAP areas, with each area having its own fuel poverty ranking of sub areas at local authority level. In consultation with the local authorities and other social housing providers, a fuel poverty action plan would then have to be drawn up. This would enable a move through the region delivering a "Warm Zone" approach and tackling fuel poverty and energy efficiency together. With a Warm Zone approach being active in each region, a five or ten year plan could be agreed that would allow all households in Scotland direct access to support and advice. At the same time, those in greatest need would still receive instant assistance and not have to wait for the zoned assistance to reach them, as this might possibly take years.

Each zone would work as part of the wider programme and so would have access to the records of the reactive approach. When moving through areas they would therefore know which homes had already received assistance and the nature of that assistance.

How would it work?

A central managing agent would have to be appointed to take on the national management role, and to ensure all partners use the same software and deliver against an agreed protocol. The central managing agent would also act as a central depository for all information collected in the regional areas.

Each area would be put out to tender for the appointment of a delivery/practical management agent who would be required to work to the agreed national plan and in co-operation with the local authorities and other housing providers regionally. The delivery agent would then be tasked with appointing local contractors and working with local authorities, agreeing the zone path through the region and co-ordinating a programme of reactive works, much like HIS and EAP just now. However, this approach should lead to more cohesive and co-ordinated delivery.

By using the fuel poverty map of the region, work plans could target those areas in greatest need in terms of fuel poverty, while the reactive EAP could provide support and measures to individuals in other parts of the region who make themselves known and actively seek help. A smaller area approach could be taken with this type of client by targeting neighbours to ensure effectiveness of delivery. This is particularly necessary where an individual who lives in a terraced or four in a block type property comes forward for assistance because in order to ensure the effective delivery of measures such as cavity wall or loft insulation, the adjoining properties would also need to take the measures.

Who pays?

The Scottish Government already pays for both EAP and a substantial part of HIS. By joining these schemes together and also combining them with CERT and local authority/housing association capital works programmes, then a co-ordinated and sizable funding package can be created.

Conclusion

EAS believes that Scottish Ministers should realign the EAP and HIS programmes in order that they work more closely together, and that discussions are required with COSLA, SFHA and the Scottish fuel suppliers in order to bring this more comprehensive and potentially more effective funding package together.