



Claire Coutinho MP

Secretary of State
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
1 Victoria St
London
SW1E 5ND

8 September 2023

Dear Secretary of State,

On behalf of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition, congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero.

We appreciate that you will be incredibly busy with the volume of vital decisions that are in your in-tray. And we know from [recent polling](#) that policies to reduce energy bills are seen by voters as the best way to tackle the cost of living crisis.

It is vitally important that the right decisions are made to reform Britain's broken energy system. As we explained in [evidence to the House of Commons Energy Security Committee](#) this week, the situation is perilous, the outlook deeply worrying and the need for support with energy bills is increasingly urgent.

We were disappointed that the previous Secretary of State abandoned plans to consult on reform of energy tariffs which could help protect the most vulnerable from the worst excesses of the energy market in the long term. We hope you will recommit the Government to this vital consultation on a social tariff - and introduce reforms before the Energy Price Guarantee protections end in Spring 2024. You can read our letter to the Speaker of the House of Commons online [\[pdf link\]](#).

As an immediate priority, the Government must commit to providing a targeted package of support to help the most vulnerable stay warm this winter:

- Introduce the widely supported "[Help to Repay](#)" proposals to tackle energy debt
- Move policy costs from energy bills to be covered by general government spending
- Support local authorities by investing the underspend in the Energy Bills Support Scheme into Household Support Funds
- Reform and re-run the [Energy Bills Support Scheme \(EBSS\) Alternative Fund](#)
- Deliver a new Extreme Weather Payment of £6.50 per day for every day the Met Office declares the temperature will drop below -4 degrees Celsius (with the potential for a similar equivalent for summer months also investigated)
- Ensure that all households who received the Warm Homes Discount in winter 2021/22 can access a £150 rebate this winter, regardless of the new process introduced in winter 2022/23 which uses an algorithm to decide who benefits.
- Provide a new energy cost support scheme (ECSS) for households most in need of support applied directly to energy accounts (for example via the reduction of unit

costs and standing charges, which can be done using existing Energy Price Guarantee mechanisms).

- Ban the forced transfer of homes to prepayment meters and end the Government's [dereliction of duty on this issue](#).
- Work with housing ministers to reform the Private Rented Sector to ensure higher and more enforceable Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

At the moment, many of the other vital reforms needed to reduce energy bills are seen as longer term, but the reality is that decisions need to be taken now to:

- Speed up reforms to ensure customers start enjoying the advantages of more affordable renewable electricity options, and that their electricity rates are no longer subject to the unpredictable cost fluctuations of fossil fuels.
- Turn the current crisis into an opportunity to engage households in a large-scale retrofitting programme, investing in an emergency roll out of cheap energy saving measures that could permanently cut energy bills by hundreds of pounds.
- Address UK energy security and independence by quickly weaning the UK off its dependence on oil and gas and ending subsidies for fossil fuels, using the money to support a fair transition, invest in immediate support for vulnerable households and long term measures to reduce the cost of energy and make the UK supply more secure.
- Ensure Ofgem works with energy firms to improve standards of customer service at energy firms, holding them accountable for contact ease, success and empathy. This means customers can get in touch with their energy supplier to resolve issues easily, that problems are solved in one contact and that customers are treated with respect and understanding throughout all forms of communication from the energy firm.

We look forward to working with you in your role and if you would like to discuss any of the issues we have raised, please do not hesitate to contact us via our coordinator Simon Francis (simon.francis@campaigncollective.org / 07738487259).

Yours sincerely,

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition

About the Coalition

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition campaigns to influence government and other bodies to take action to end fuel poverty and thereby improve people's health and quality of life as well as seeking to reduce the cost of living, create jobs and negate carbon emissions in the process. It is a broad coalition of over 70 anti-poverty, environmental and health campaigners, local authorities, trade unions and consumer organisations.

Members of the Coalition include: [Action with Communities in Rural England](#), [ACE Research](#), [Advice for Renters](#), [AgeUK](#), [All Birmingham's Children](#), [Austerity Action Group](#), [Association of Green Councillors](#), [Association of Local Energy Officers](#), [Association for Decentralised Energy](#), [Asthma + Lung UK](#), [Beat the Cold](#), [Brighton & Hove City Council](#), [Bruton Town Council](#), [Camden Federation of Private Tenants](#), [Child Poverty Action Group](#), [Church Poverty Action](#), [Chartered Institute of Environmental Health](#), [Chartered Institute of Housing](#), [Community Action Northumberland](#), [Centre for Sustainable Energy](#), [Climate Action Network West Midlands](#), [Disability Poverty Campaign Group](#), [Disability Rights UK](#), [E3G](#), [EBICO](#), [End Child Poverty Coalition](#), [Energy Saving Trust](#), [Energy Cities](#), [Fair Energy Campaign](#), [Epilepsy Action](#), [Foster Support](#), [Friends of the Earth](#), [Fuel Poverty Action](#), [Fuel Poverty Research Network](#), [Generation Rent](#), [Good Law Project](#), [Greenpeace](#), [Groundwork](#), [Hackney Foodbank](#), [Home Start Oxford](#), [Independent Age](#), [Inner City Life](#), [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#), [Lambeth Pensioners Action Group](#), [London Borough of Camden](#), London

Borough of Lewisham, [Mayor of London](#), Moorland Climate Action, [National Pensioners Convention](#), National Union of Students / [Students Organising for Sustainability](#), NCB, [National Energy Action](#), [New Economics Foundation](#), National Federation of Women's Institutes, [Northern Health Services Alliance](#), [Oxford City Council](#), [Positive Money Tower Hamlets](#), Redcar & Cleveland Council, [Repowering London](#), Retrofit Bruton, Right To Energy Coalition, [Ryecroft Community Hub](#), Save the Children, [Scope](#), [Shaping Our Lives](#), Social Workers Union, [South East London Community Energy](#), [Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations](#), South West London Law Centres, [Stonewater Housing Association](#), [Stop The Squeeze](#), Uplift, [UNISON](#), Warm & Well North Yorkshire, [Warm & Well in Merton](#).

The coordination for the [End Fuel Poverty Coalition](#) is provided by social enterprise [Campaign Collective](#). In Scotland we work closely with [Energy Action Scotland](#). In Wales, we work with [Climate Cymru's Warm This Winter](#) activity and in Northern Ireland with the NEA-backed [Fuel Poverty NI coalition](#).

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