



Angus B MacNeil MP,  
Chair, Select Committee on Energy Security & Net Zero  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Cc: Sir Robert Neill MP (Chair, Select Committee on Justice),  
Anne McLaughlin MP (Chair APPG on PPMs),  
Ofgem

Monday 23 October 2023

Dear Members of the House of Commons Select Committee on Energy Security & Net Zero,

Last week Scottish Power was granted 124 warrants by Berkshire Magistrates Court to forcibly enter people's homes to force them onto prepayment meters (PPMs). According to media reports, the magistrate granted all 124 warrants after examining just 20 of them in detail.

One of these warrants was granted against a property in Grimsby, almost 200 miles away.

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition has very serious concerns about this decision and would like to request your help in understanding the circumstances around the warrants. We would request that you hold an emergency session of the Committee to take evidence from:

- Scottish Power
- Richburns Ltd (debt collection agency)
- His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service
- Ofgem

This would need to take place within the next 28 days before energy firms start enforcing warrants. We have set out some of the concerns we would suggest MPs raise with these organisations below.

The forced PPMs scandal rocked the energy industry after [investigations by the i paper](#) and [The Times](#) revealed the extent energy firms were using the courts to gain warrants to people's homes to force vulnerable people onto PPMs.

Expert reports cited in the End Fuel Poverty Coalition's response to a recent Ofgem consultation [\[pdf\]](#) highlighted the [health dangers](#) potentially caused by people's PPMs switching off and leaving them in cold damp homes.

These warrants were granted despite a ban on the forced transfer of homes onto prepayment meters still being in place. Our understanding that a ban was:

- a. On magistrates from granting warrants - as set out by the Chief Magistrate for England & Wales
- b. On energy firms executing these warrants - as set out by Ofgem

**Will the Committee ask His Majesty's Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) if they have now lifted this ban? What conditions have they imposed on the restart of granting warrants? Does HMCTS believe bulk processing of warrant applications is acceptable? Does HMCTS believe that granting a warrant in a court 200 miles away from a household is acceptable?**

**Can HMCTS provide evidence to the Committee to prove that everyone summoned to court in these circumstances has the confidence, awareness and knowledge of their rights to appear in court and ability to plead their case?**

Under the conditions Scottish Power is expected to meet before they are given the green light to restart forcing homes onto PPMs, they have to assess a home for vulnerability. However, a spokesperson for the company [told Press Association](#) "we are only applying for warrants for customers who have refused to engage with us on repayment after multiple attempts, to agree a repayment arrangement that is affordable to their circumstances."

**Will the Committee ask Scottish Power and their debt collection agency Richburns how, if a customer has refused to engage with them, have they been able to assess if they are vulnerable or not?**

Under the new Ofgem conditions of restart, warrants must be signed off by an energy firm's board of directors. **Will the Committee ask the Chief Executive of Scottish Power what role they played in sanctioning these warrant applications?**

**Can Ofgem confirm to the Committee that the board of Scottish Power, and other energy firms' boards of directors, are responsible for the actions of their subcontractors (such as Richburns) in following the code of practice at all times? Can Ofgem confirm that any breaches by subcontractors will be treated by Ofgem as a breach of licence conditions?**

**Will the Committee ask Scottish Power representatives if they feel it is acceptable to force their way into a customers' home to recover energy debt, given the profits it and its parent company have made from the energy crisis, which has caused this debt?**

**Can Scottish Power explain to the Committee why it [tops the Government's list of shame](#) for the most forced prepayment meter installations and the reasons why its board appears to be the most desperate to restart forced installations?**

We understand that energy debt is a growing problem, new figures to be published this week by Money Advice Trust are expected to show that the energy debt crisis is even worse than we feared.

**Rather than support energy firms using forced PPMs, will the Committee ask Ofgem and energy firms for their views on the establishment of a [Help to Repay scheme](#) for energy debt which is a sustainable way to help households?**

**Will the Committee support these proposals backed by a range of frontline charities?**

A legally enforceable ban on the forced transfer of homes onto a PPM is the only solution to this abuse of power. However, the Government rejected backbench amendments to the Energy Bill which would have given it the power to ban the forced transfer of households onto prepayment meters (PPMs).

## Will the Committee now support a legally enforceable ban on the forced transfer of homes onto a PPM?

We would be grateful for a prompt response to our letter. Please email [info@endfuelpoverty.org.uk](mailto:info@endfuelpoverty.org.uk) and copy to the coordinator Simon Francis – [REDACTED] if you have any urgent questions, you can call the coordinator on [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely,

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition

*The End Fuel Poverty Coalition is a [broad coalition of more than 70 anti-poverty, health, housing and environmental campaigners, charities, local authorities, trade unions and consumer organisations](#). It is also supported by academics, social enterprises and those working on the front line of fighting fuel poverty.*

*We believe that everybody has the right to a warm, dry home that they can afford to heat and power.*

*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](#), [Basingstoke & Deane Borough Council](#), [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](#) and the Coalition is also part of the [Warm This Winter](#) campaign. 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](#).*