

# Energy Review

SPRING 2026

The quarterly journal of Energy Action Scotland



**energy**  
**action**  
**SCOTLAND**

for a future without fuel poverty





**Fergal Sharkey, once of the Undertones and these days an ardent and successful campaigner for improving the quality of our inland waterways, sang of the challenges of finding good people in his 1985 hit. But he was optimistic. It's important to be optimistic.**

The Scottish Parliament elections are scheduled every 4 years, a certainty of planning of something enshrined in legislation, it preserves and protects democracy. Energy seems to be an enduring crisis of unplanned events where failures of legislation and regulation are laid bare when energy increases magnify the inequalities in the system.

It seems our permacrisis is in its third chapter, following those for COVID and the Russian attack on Ukraine both of which had devastating impacts on low income households and people with health vulnerabilities, disabled people, older people and families with young children. Our capacity to reflect on the lessons we should have learned is undiminished whereas our learning is far from evident in the change or improvements we see the support systems. As we begin chapter 3, Conflict in the Middle East, the need to prepare seems as pressing as ever. Time is short but there is time. Time before the winter period when we know that high unaffordable energy prices take their greatest toll.

I sound a bit downbeat but there is optimism that if we, all of us, prepare for the worst of times then we can reduce the impacts and improve the outcomes for people who need it most. Energy Action Scotland and colleagues from across the third sector wrote to the First Minister to urge the Scottish Government to begin to plan for the winter. A holistic plan, looking at the consequential effects across health and social care, extending to our emergency services and the third emergency service, the charitable advice sector.

The elections mark an uncertainty and certainly a loss of continuity. Over 40 MSPs will definitely no longer be in Parliament as they are not standing and the shape and nature of Government may be

determined in a period beyond the election. Our asks of parties for these elections and the period beyond are in our 'Manifesto', drawn up with input from members. Unsurprising and entirely predictable asks focussed on deeper targeted support for people that need it, a focus on improving the fabric and reducing the consumption requirements of homes and a better resourced support sector. Nationally we hope the Scottish Government and all parties support a call to the UK Government to introduce a social tariff or discount for the most vulnerable in society. It was ever thus...

It is affordable to do all of these things vs the cost of simply not doing them. When we fail to act the cost is measured not just in pounds and pence but in the loss of the quality of lives and the ultimate price, where lives are lost. It is unfair and it is entirely avoidable. It is still about choices...political ones.

This Energy Review celebrates some of those heroic people in our community. People that go the extra mile to make a difference where it is need the most. Heroes save lives and our heroes really do. They do this selflessly and with dogged determination and with no small amount of creativity. They and so many others are deserving of recognition and I hope that all of us can take some inspiration from their endeavours.

Whilst it is tempting to sign off on some 80's throwback I'm drawn to Glasgow's own optimist Warren McIntyre and his Starry Skies who ask 'You want to give some more, but how to do it you're not sure, guess we have to start, to look inside our hearts' and to bridge to another of their tracks I think we are all in need of 'Kind Hearted People'.

**I sound a bit downbeat but there is optimism that if we, all of us, prepare for the worst of times then we can reduce the impacts and improve the outcomes for people who need it most.**



**Frazer Scott,**  
Chief Executive Officer

24 March 2026

Rt Hon John Swinney MSP  
First Minister of Scotland  
Scottish Government  
St Andrews House  
Regent Road  
Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG



Dear First Minister,

The ongoing conflict in the Middle East has once again driven up global energy prices, creating a renewed crisis for households across Scotland. Users of heating oil and LPG are already feeling the impact, and from July onwards average gas and electricity bills may rise above £2,000, with the risk of further increases into Winter 2026/27. For many—particularly those in rural and island communities, disabled people, families with young children and people with long-term or terminal conditions—these average figures vastly understate the real costs required to live safely, warmly, and with dignity.

Scotland is already facing a situation in which one in three people cannot afford essential heat and power. During the previous peak in 2022/23, even with government support, Scotland recorded its highest level of winter deaths in two decades, and research by Age Scotland found that in December 2023 almost 900 people over the age of 50 were admitted to hospital with symptoms consistent with hypothermia.

For those on low incomes or with unavoidably high energy needs, this is not a new crisis, it is a continuation of hardship that began in 2022. Energy prices have remained around 50% higher than in 2021, and energy debt has climbed to more than £4.5 billion across Great Britain, with households in Scotland carrying over £500 million of this burden. Frontline advice services report that hundreds of thousands of households are now struggling with more than £2,000 of energy arrears.

We welcome recent support for low income households using heating oil and alternative fuels, and the intention to introduce regulation. However, regulation will take time, and thousands remain unprotected—particularly households whose energy is supplied by a third party such as private landlords, park home owners, and temporary accommodation providers.

Charities and community organisations are already responding to the consequences of high prices and will face further pressure if costs rise again. Without urgent action, we risk an increase in dangerous behaviours, from energy meter & supply tampering to people simply going without heat, as people struggle to cope, and additional strain on hospitals, social care, and emergency services. With Scottish Parliament elections approaching, and the time required to form a new Government, delays in planning would put lives at risk.

It is essential that preparations begin now for all scenarios that may develop over summer and into the winter.

Our asks on behalf of our members, our supporting colleagues and those in need:

1. Begin immediate preparation of a comprehensive Winter 2026/27 Plan, ensuring support reaches those most at risk, including disabled people, those with long-term conditions, and households outside traditional support routes.
2. Fully involve the voluntary and community sector in developing this plan.
3. Provide support to the wider advice and support sectors, which continue to shoulder the administrative and operational burden of national schemes without dedicated funding.

Yours

Frazer Scott  
Chief Executive Officer

Supported by:

- **The ALLIANCE, Lucy Mulvagh, Director of Policy, Research and Impact**
- **Citizens Advice Scotland, Derek Mitchell, CEO**
- **End Fuel Poverty Coalition, Simon Francis, Co-Ordinator**
- **Existing Homes Alliance Scotland, Lori McElroy, Chair**
- **Fuel Bank Foundation, Siobhan Doyle, Head of Impact**
- **One Parent Families Scotland, Satwat Rehman, CEO**
- **Poverty Alliance, Peter Kelly, CEO**
- **Save the Children, Claire Telfer, Head of Scotland**
- **Scottish Federation of Housing Associations, Richard Meade, CEO**

References:

1. <https://www.cornwall-insight.com/predictions-and-insights-into-the-default-tariff-cap/>
2. <https://www.agescotland.org.uk/news/1293-charity-publishes-shocking-hypothermia-figures>
3. National Records of Scotland, [Winter Mortality in Scotland](#) 2022/23, published October 2023

# ENERGY ACTION SCOTLAND MANIFESTO

## OUR VISION

In a nation as energy and resource-rich as Scotland, no one should have to endure fuel poverty. For over 40 years, Energy Action Scotland has worked to expose its devastating impacts and advocate for lasting change.

We believe that everyone in Scotland should be able to access safe, warm, and affordable energy year-round—not just to heat their homes, but to live with dignity. Energy is essential for health, wellbeing, and daily life—from cooking and cleaning to storing food and medicine, it is not a luxury.

Fuel poverty is a year round issue. With rising energy costs and mounting debt, it has become a persistent crisis that disproportionately affects the most vulnerable in our society.

Fuel poverty can be eliminated through collaborative action, targeted investment, and community-driven solutions—where lived experience informs policy, and where no one is forced to choose between heating and eating. People need us to work harder together.

### MISSION OR CORE BELIEFS

Energy Action Scotland is the national third sector member-led organisation dedicated to ending fuel poverty. Since 1983, we have worked to address the structural drivers of fuel poverty and advocate for energy justice and sustainable, equitable solutions to cold, damp homes.

We are people first advocates for a fairer energy system.

Fuel poverty in Scotland is driven by four core factors:

- High energy costs
- Low disposable incomes
- Poor energy efficiency of housing
- Energy use within homes

The Fuel Poverty (Targets, Definition and Strategy) (Scotland) Act 2019 definition means that over one in three households are estimated to be in fuel poverty, with almost one in five experiencing extreme fuel poverty—unable to afford the energy required to maintain health and wellbeing.

Fuel poverty disproportionately affects rural and remote communities, where geography, climate, and health inequalities compound disadvantage.

### OUR ASKS: SUPPORT

Income support, affordability, and financial assistance for households provided at a national, regional and local level by suitably qualified trusted intermediaries

Embed fuel poverty as a required consideration across Scottish Government strategies and plans in climate, health and social security

Call for the UK Government to introduce an energy cost reduction to low income vulnerable households through a social tariff/discount funded through general taxation

### OUR ASKS: SECTORAL PRESSURE

Increasing demands on the third and support sectors, including the impact of rising costs and static funding, requires multi-year funding agreements for the vital services provided by charities

Scottish Government to lobby to ensure that energy companies provide accessible routes for advice organisations to help resolve customer issues

### OUR ASKS: RETROFIT

Maximise incentives to ensure that all public funds supporting retrofit are fully spent where they are needed most

Establish a framework to enable advice services to develop skills and knowledge to help the most vulnerable through the retrofit journey specifically enabling training for local community retrofit advisors

### Policy or Action Commitments

Fuel poverty crisis funding of £20million to be available for struggling households supporting access to warmth and securing debt write off from energy suppliers in equal measure

Area Based Scheme spending to become multiyear and support for blending with other public and private schemes such as the Energy Company Obligation to accelerate the rate of change whilst providing the highest level of quality assurance.

Extend energy protections through Scottish Government levers in areas such as park homes, temporary accommodation providers and, people without a direct relationship with an energy supplier

### Evidence & Rationale

Fuel poverty blights the lives of more than 800,000 households in Scotland (Scottish House Condition Survey 2024)

It damages healthy life expectancy, impinges on health and wellbeing and affects mental health (National Records of Scotland, winter deaths data)

When people live in cold, damp homes for sustained periods of time it forces people into frontline services. For every degree the temperature drops below 5 degrees centigrade, there is a 19% increase in older people attending GP for respiratory infection (Marmot, 2011)

900 older people were hospitalised in December 2024 with hypothermia (Age Scotland, 2025)

Babies and children, disabled people, people with life limiting conditions, people self-managing long term conditions, older people, essential medical needs require to consume higher amounts of energy to achieve the same level of health and wellbeing protection as those without (Fuel Poverty Act, enhanced heating regime provisions)

The most affordable unit of energy is the one we don't need making retrofitting homes to be more energy efficient the only long term solution to reducing our reliance of energy production as energy costs are 68% higher than winter 2020/21 with £4.4bn of GB consumer energy debt (Ofgem data).

<https://eas.org.uk/2026/03/13/energy-action-scotland-manifesto-2026/>

# Why long-term delivery capacity must survive election cycles



**In energy policy, we often talk about infrastructure in terms of grids, generation and insulation. But there is another form of infrastructure that receives far less attention: delivery capacity.**

**Advice services, retrofit coordinators, assessors, installers and local authority partners form the system that turns political ambition into measurable impact. Without stable, long-term support for that system, targets remain theoretical.**

**“with clarity and coordination, large-scale retrofit can reach the right homes and generate meaningful carbon, economic and social impact.”**



scarf Co-CEO **Lawrence Johnston**

Recently, our Co-CEO **Lawrence Johnston** gave evidence to the Scottish Affairs Committee and was clear: nationally across Scotland, “the supply chain right now is not capable of delivering the targets that currently exist.” That’s not a criticism of their ambition. It’s a recognition of capacity.

The supply chain does not scale in response to press releases. It grows in response to certainty.

When that certainty exists, delivery follows.

Through ECO4 Flex, we saw what happens when a framework is clear and partnerships are aligned. From 2023 onwards, Scarf supported 1,600 unique properties, delivering more than 4,500 energy efficiency measures. That equated to £28 million invested into the North East, over £2 million in average bill savings for households, and an average of £18,000 of funded retrofit per home.

Our wrap-around advice service ensured measures translated into sustained savings, improved confidence, and longer-term resilience for households.

For us, ECO4 Flex did not represent a policy that struggled in delivery. It showed that, with clarity and coordination, large-scale retrofit can reach the right homes and generate meaningful carbon, economic and social impact.

But as the scheme draws to a close, uncertainty has returned...

This stop-start cycle makes it harder to close the skills gap, harder to retain experienced teams, and harder to give households confidence that support will still exist next year.

If the next Parliament is serious about meeting energy efficiency and fuel poverty targets, stability must be treated as infrastructure. Schemes that demonstrate effective, accountable delivery should not be subject to short-term political cycles. They must be given enough time to mature, scale, and embed.

Political intent alone is not enough. Without long-term commitment to delivery capacity, we’ll always be playing catch-up.



## In memory of Martin Mathers

**Our colleague and friend, Martin Mathers, sadly passed away last year and is greatly missed by all of us at BRDT.**

Martin was the manager of The HEAT Project, which he was instrumental in setting up, and was a valued member of the BRDT team for nearly ten years. His professional expertise and infectious enthusiasm were integral to the success of The HEAT Project.

Whether he was speaking to young families struggling to heat their homes or to government officials and ministers, he was always approachable and keen to share his knowledge, and we could always count on him to get a message across - either by pedalling a smoothie bike at countless events, building a toilet for a market stall to demonstrate how to save water, or by effectively articulating the impact proposed policy changes would have on thousands of people to those with the power to influence change.

Martin made us laugh and he made us think, and he encouraged so many people to think and act differently to effect positive change.

His unwavering commitment to campaigning for climate change and making a real difference to people’s lives by improving energy efficiency and reducing energy poverty was nothing short of inspirational and something we will all continue to work towards achieving in his memory.

Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

<https://theheatprojectscotland.org/>

Photo courtesy of Clare McMicking, CraicN Communications.

### **Kamila Feddek,**

Williamsburgh Housing Association (Renfrewshire) Fuel Poverty Hero 2024

“Energy affordability must be grounded in dignity and fairness – warm homes should be a basic human right, not a privilege. Ending fuel poverty requires political will, long term funding, and policies that put people before price.”

### **Kenny Cameron,**

Connected Response (Edinburgh) Fuel Poverty Hero 2025

“If an incoming Scottish Government truly cares about fuel poverty, then it makes sense for it to focus its efforts on helping those whose needs are greatest. Where can it get the biggest bang for its bawbee?

“Statistically, families in properties with electric heating are three times more likely to be fuel poor than those with gas central heating. Put gas on the backburner and look at ways the fuel poor with electric heating can access Scotland’s abundant renewable electricity. Scottish wind curtailment – paying wind farms to switch off their turbines – cost around £350m in 2025, a cost that was passed on to energy consumers through their bills. Why not enable the fuel poor to access this electricity for heating at low or no cost? The technology exists to do this, but the benefits are currently focussed on middle-class early adopters with electric vehicles, batteries or solar.

“A new Scottish Government should also be working harder with Westminster to ensure the 240,000 homes in Scotland with electric storage heating have access to an energy tariff with afternoon and early evening charging windows. Currently, 95% of these homes are still constrained by tariffs like Economy 7 which reflect a 1970s concept of what off-peak energy looks like. Surely in 2026, with sufficient commitment and focus, politicians and the energy companies can resolve this injustice once and for all.”

### **Kirsty Macleod,**

Tighean Innse Gall (Stornoway) Fuel Poverty Hero 2024

“Fuel poverty in Scotland is currently being driven first and foremost by unaffordable fuel costs, particularly for households in island and off gas communities who have no choice but to rely on expensive oil or electricity. These households are exposed to extreme price volatility and consistently pay far more to heat their homes simply because of where they live. “The Scottish Government must ensure that fairer pricing, targeted protections and effective regulation of off gas fuels sit at the heart of its fuel poverty response. Without addressing these structural cost inequalities, fuel poverty will remain entrenched in rural areas regardless of wider policy ambition. “At the same time, trusted local support agencies play a critical role in helping households cope with high fuel costs, access advice, and avoid crisis. Yet without secure, long term core funding, their ability, under increasing demand, to deliver consistent, preventative support remains undermined. Sustained core funding for these organisations is essential if support is to be preventative rather than reactive.”

### **Dr Manal Eshelli,**

WESRC (Glasgow) Fuel Poverty Hero 2025

“My number one ask of a new Scottish Government would be to ensure sustained, targeted support for households experiencing fuel poverty, with a strong focus on early intervention and accessible advice services to prevent people from reaching crisis point. This support must also address the barriers that many people face, barriers such as language, digital exclusion, lack of accessible information, and difficulties navigating services or even difficulty engaging with services. So that no one is left behind.”

### **Lynda Mitchell,**

ALLenergy (Oban, Fuel Poverty Hero 2025

“Here in the northwest of Scotland we have the highest energy prices, the greatest need for heat, and the worst levels of fuel poverty in the UK. Much of the area is off gas, leading to reliance on much more expensive heating types. This leads to multiple household deprivations: poor physical and mental health, poor educational and employability outcomes, and ultimately even loss of life through excess winter deaths, due to cold and damp living conditions. Yet we have the most abundant natural renewable energy resources. We are surrounded by wind turbines on our windy hills, producing large amounts of cheap electricity. Scottish Government needs to step up pressure on Westminster about the unfairness of the current electricity pricing strategy, and to do more to support mechanisms whereby local energy-related revenues can be used to alleviate local energy-related problems.”

### **Ewelina Lukaszek,**

ELREC (Edinburgh) Fuel Poverty Hero 2025

“My number one ask of the new Scottish Government is to create fuel poverty support policies that recognise that energy support for ethnically marginalised communities must be not only language-accessible but also culturally sensitive and inclusive, so communities can access the help they truly need.”

### **Stewart Wilson,**

Point & Sandwick Trust’s Energy Support Unit (Isle of Lewis) Fuel Poverty Hero 2025

“As we engage with households experiencing the daily challenges of heating their homes we continually see the twofold need of immediate financial relief coupled with sustained support. To that end we would call on the Scottish Government to reestablish their fuel insecurity fund but also ensure the fuel poverty strategy directly promotes core support for local trusted organisations like the Point and Sandwick Trust, recognised for their fuel poverty mitigation work.”

# extraordinary things...

2025 was a year of celebrations and anniversaries with member charities and businesses celebrating 10, 25 and 40 year milestones. It is fantastic to see great organisations thrive as they help ever increasing numbers of struggling households and it makes one wonder whether any of our founders thought that we would all be needed for so long, with no end in sight.

Thankfully, **Energy Action Scotland** comprises a community that doesn't give up and 2025 has provided another inspiring set of organisations and people to remind us of the extraordinary things achieved every day - changing lives and giving a hand up to people when they need it most.

## Fuel Poverty Hero: Allenergy.



2025's first Fuel Poverty Hero is a local trusted charity who has for over 25 years been a cornerstone of life in their community. Rural communities have for many decades endured some of the greatest energy inequalities and yet this charity has always delivered incredible results for the people it helps.

Its work includes:

- Helping vulnerable households cut energy costs and stay warm.
- Developing locally-owned renewable initiatives that reduce carbon emissions and deliver community benefits.
- Delivering STEM workshops and career guidance to inspire future generations.

## Fuel Poverty Hero: Point & Sandwick Trust's Energy Support Unit

When communities lead, the results are invariably, if not undeniably, better. Tailored and responsive to local circumstances, community owned renewables have in many places provided monies for vital community services. While support has been inconsistent, this local organisation, in remote rural Scotland, is providing an absolute exemplar of what can be done. Through activities funded entirely through their community owned wind farm profits, they are pioneering a model of how locally owned renewable energy can be reinvested directly into social good, helping households to heat their homes, reduce energy stress, and strengthen community resilience.



Operating in one of the UK's most energy-vulnerable yet energy rich regions, with fuel poverty levels over 80%, they are helping people cope and prepare better for what the energy system and our changing climate can throw at them.

## Fuel Poverty Hero: South Lanarkshire Council's Money Matters Advice Service.

Our next award goes to a service that has transformed the way local government responds to fuel and financial poverty. They have adopted a model that ensures that no household supported is left without heat, light, or food. They deliver same-day crisis support while connecting people to long-term solutions through integrated welfare rights, money, and energy advice. They have turned short-term support into long-term recovery, undoubtedly setting a benchmark for tackling fuel poverty across Scotland.





**Fuel Poverty Hero:  
West of Scotland Racial  
Equalities Council, WESREC.**

There are many reasons why people struggle to manage within our energy systems. This organisation has shown exceptional dedication to supporting communities, delivering impactful services, and addressing inequality and social challenges with compassion and professionalism. It's commitment, flexibility, and proactive approach make a real difference to the people they serve.

It actively supports individuals in resolving issues with energy suppliers and works to remove barriers that prevent vulnerable people where English is not a first language from accessing fair and affordable energy services. They empower people, they build confidence which ensures that the people they help are able to be more capable and independent.



**Lifetime Achievement Award  
Kenny Cameron, Connected  
Response**

This award celebrates someone who is not only a long standing member and supporter of Energy Action Scotland but someone who has made an enormous contribution to the lives of people with electric heating, people with an incredibly high likelihood of being in fuel poverty.

A champion for technology and innovation to help deal with problems caused by poorly installed, configured or briefed people with the equipment in their home, the has a long and distinguished career in the energy sector, and long may that continue.

Pioneering, trailing, providing solutions, partnering with housing bodies to ensure that not only do people live more affordably and comfortable but that those landlords can reduce some of their costs which might have happened if they replaced perfectly functional storage heating. We are grateful for you expertise, your support and the huge impact you have made on the lives of so many fuel poor households.

**Fuel Poverty Hero:  
Ewelina Lukaszek,  
Edinburgh and Lothians  
Regional Equality Council**

An individual can make a difference. It is no exaggeration to say that this is lifesaving work.

Ewelina Lukaszek is tenacious, determined, creative and always goes the extra mile, challenging all of those business and organisations whose services fail to provide the right support. She has built partnerships and, has through her leadership, helped hundreds of people who have felt excluded and have certainly been disadvantaged by the energy system.

Ensuring that people received essential energy packs, radiator foils, draught excluders and more to improve comfort for people many living in social and private rented accommodation. She ensured that materials were available in languages for the Polish, Indian and Chinese communities.





# The Missing Piece in Fuel Poverty Policy: Political Will

**The steps the Scottish Government needs to take to address the drivers of fuel poverty are widely understood across government, academia, industry and the third sector. Yet progress hasn't been made at pace, raising questions not of knowledge, but of political commitment and willingness to act.**

Building on an analysis of government policy documents, this research involved interviewing academics, politicians, industry and third sector stakeholders, asking them to draw insights from their experiences working in the fields of fuel poverty and energy policy. This research examines the aims and impacts of four key policies identified in earlier stages of the

research (The Energy Company Obligation, the Energy Price Cap, the Pension Age Winter Heating Payment and the New Build Heat Standard). Exploring core topics such as targeting, funding, and what improvements could be made to these policies. This was done to understand how we can, going forward, develop more effective and equitable policies to eliminate fuel poverty in Scotland.

Are the concerns, implementation challenges, policy aims, and drivers of fuel poverty addressed in policy documents, and are these reflected in the insights of stakeholders across academia, government, industry, and the third sector? What are the key challenges and narratives that are identified by these groups?

## The Findings and Narratives Emerging from the Research

**The narratives taking shape cover a variety of topics, including how policies are funded, assumptions about who is considered 'able to pay' and who is eligible for support, the levies and costs that make up a household energy bill, and what is contributing to the behavioural inertia of government.**

Funding was a consistent theme across both interview transcripts and policy documents, particularly in relation to how policy costs are reflected in household energy bills, including standing charges. Interview respondents discussed how the amount of funding being

funnelled to help households pay their energy bills is so large that little remains to support energy-efficiency improvements, an often-repeated long-term necessity to address fuel poverty. While stakeholders frequently discussed taxation as a core mechanism for increasing funding, this raised a larger question of political will. Respondents highlighted the minimal contributions of the energy industry, despite their record-breaking profits. Proposals such as windfall or redress taxes were repeatedly raised as a means of addressing the funding gap while redistributing these excess profits. This points to a broader argument emerging from the data: that more assertive fiscal measures, alongside greater control over how funds are allocated, are key issues for the Scottish government.

Political narratives around feasibility and policymaking mindsets also emerged across the data. There is no shortage of evidence, both within this study and the wider literature, on how fuel poverty can be effectively addressed. Rather, the data imply that the central challenge lies in a persistent lack of political will. Respondents consistently emphasised that sufficient resources exist within the system but are not being utilised to their full potential. As Scotland approaches another election cycle, familiar concerns arise about the tendency to prioritise short-term, politically convenient measures over sustained interventions that are capable of delivering long-term change. There needs to be a shift in political approach: one that prioritises long-term thinking, and is willing to pursue more effective, if less immediately popular, policy choices. Crucially,

this requires breaking the cycle of frequent policy change tied to electoral timelines.

Ultimately, addressing fuel poverty requires moving beyond promises toward decisive, sustained, and coordinated action. I ask the Scottish Government to follow through on their promise to take significant steps towards eliminating fuel poverty, with specific actions on how they can move forward. These include:

- Moving beyond the electoral cycles and resisting defaulting to "easy" or politically convenient decisions.
- Fuel poverty policy must expand beyond a narrow focus on pensioners, recognising that a wider range of demographic groups are affected and may currently be underserved.
- Politicians must be willing to act in the interest of all constituents, including those who are less politically active or visible.
- There is a need for stronger advocacy toward Westminster to address high energy prices and overly complex support systems that hinder effective assistance.

The need for structural reforms, such as decoupling electricity prices from gas, could address both fuel poverty and decarbonisation goals.

- Acknowledging that there is no "silver bullet" solution. Eliminating fuel poverty requires a comprehensive mix of short-term relief (such as financial support for energy bills) and long-term investment in housing stock and energy efficiency.

- With the end of ECO, there is an opportunity to learn from past successes and failures in order to design better energy efficiency policies going forward.
- A clear transition plan and "stop-gap" measures are needed to maintain industry and public confidence during these and other policy shifts.
- The need for improved targeting within universal schemes, even where this may be politically challenging.
- Longer-term programmes should operate on multi-year cycles (with a minimum of three years) to ensure stability, effectiveness, and trust from households.
- Expanding accessible, localised support (such as in-person energy advice services) could improve uptake of energy efficiency measures and behavioural change.

There is a clear gap between the Scottish Government's stated ambitions and the pace of implementation. What matters next is whether, after the May elections, policymakers act with the urgency and resolve needed to close that gap.

**Megan Scherrer** is a PhD Candidate conducting research through the Centre for Energy Policy at the University of Strathclyde. Funded in part by EAS she aims to conduct research that sits at the intersection of heating decarbonisation and fuel poverty policy, exploring where and how the Scottish government can leverage its devolved powers to mitigate and work towards eliminating fuel poverty in Scotland while advancing towards 2040 heating decarbonisation goals.

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