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**The Voice of Leaseholders**

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## **Next Government must tackle scandal of fuel poverty in leasehold flats!**

The Federation of Private Residents Associations has responded to the Fuel Poverty enquiry by calling on the next Government to prioritise leasehold flats which make up some the most fuel poor households in the Country.

The FPRA has joined forces with a major coalition of anti-poverty, energy, environmental and health campaigning organisations that have produced a charter of measures needed to eradicate the scandal of fuel poverty.

The Federation of Private Residents Associations are calling on the next UK Government to commit to making all fuel poor homes as energy efficient as a home built today.

The Federation is warning that although the Government has taken some welcome steps, targets to end fuel poverty in England by 2016 will be impossible to meet unless there are changes made to the current leasehold system to address blocks of flats many of which are not connected to the mains gas grid.

Federation Chairman Bob Smytherman and Fuel Poverty Coalition Member Bob Smytherman, said:

‘It should be a right, not a privilege, for everybody to have warm, dry home that they can afford to heat, including leaseholder flat owners. The main political parties have all exchanged rhetoric on the importance of ending fuel poverty but

what we need now is concerted action. Any political party serious about ending the hardship millions of fuel poor households are facing must commit to make existing fuel poor flats as energy efficient as those flats that are built today.'

'The Federation is worried about [the](#) confusing and uncoordinated range of energy efficiency [measures](#) and their lack of measurable energy efficiency targets for 'hard to reach' properties like leasehold flats. Unless an improved national energy efficiency scheme is introduced to include leasehold flats, many more vulnerable pensioners, families and disabled people will be pushed into fuel poverty.'

'Although such a scheme would require significant investment from landlords and freeholders, it would help lift millions of the poorest flat-dwellers out of fuel poverty and at the same time dramatically cut CO2 emissions, create more than 35,000 jobs, and put over £6 billion back into the economy.'

The FPRA are joining forces with The Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA) to call on the Energy Retail Association and OFGEM to investigate -

- VAT on supplies to common parts of flats
- Failure of utility companies to appreciate that resident management companies (RMC's) that have responsibility for blocks of flats cannot be assessed like other commercial businesses. There is a lack of open competition for supplies to common parts and RMC's are being charged unreasonable tariffs which fall on leaseholders through the service charge payments.
- Disconnection protocol for supplies to common parts of blocks of flats to avoid supplies being disconnected which will result in no fire alarm or emergency lighting in the blocks endangering life in the event of a fire.

ENDS

**The Federation of Private Residents Association's response to the Fuel poverty inquiry carried out by the Energy and Climate Change Select committee which was published last month.**

I am writing to you on behalf of The Federation of Private Residents Associations who are members of the End Fuel Poverty Coalition. We are a national not for profit organisation that represents the interests of long leaseholders which we do via their Residents' Associations as our response to the Energy and Climate Change Committee call for written evidence for its inquiry into fuel poverty.

Our organisation is an active supporter of the Government's policy on energy efficiency and climate change and welcome the announcement of £150m extra funding for Warm Front for 2010/11, however the one to two million leasehold flats in the UK (a significant proportion of homes) we believe are effectively

excluded from carrying out many home insulation initiatives as a result of legislation or because there is no provision for this in their leases.

Much legislation on energy efficiency and certainly the legislation that provides for Grants effectively exclude those living in leasehold flats because the grants are aimed at individuals that purchase in their own names rather than through communal arrangements especially where some live in a block where they would otherwise qualify for a grant whereas others in a block do not.

Most leases only provide for maintenance of existing facilities and there is no provision for “improvements”. There have been many court cases challenging the validity of service charges where any improvement e.g. Double glazing has been disallowed because this is an improvement not maintenance. We would request the Government provides some clarity on this issue to avoid expensive challenges at Leasehold Valuation Tribunals (LVT) or County Courts.

If the government is to succeed in its targets it needs to seriously consider the situation for long leasehold flats and work in conjunction with the Department of Communities and Local Government (Leasehold Reform Branch) which we believe can be done by way of amendment to existing leasehold legislation such as the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.

We support the Government’s commitment to eradicate fuel poverty by 2016 and believe there needs to be changes to leasehold law to enable the wide spread roll-out of cavity wall and loft insulation for vulnerable people living leasehold block of flats.

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**Notes to Editors:**

**The Energy and Climate Change Committee has published a Report on Fuel Poverty.** Copies of the report may be obtained from the Stationery Office (Tel 0845 702 3474) and will be available on the website at the address below from the day of publication

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmenergy.htm>

- A copy of the [charter](#) is available. The charter was launched on Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March at the House of Commons Terrace.

A household is considered to be in fuel poverty when it spends 10% or more of its income on energy bills.

The FPRA is a non-political, not-for-profit advice, support and lobbying organisation for our members who include private residential leaseholders, tenants' and residents' associations and residential management companies as well as those companies where the leaseholders together own the freehold of their own residential block.

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