

Rt Hon George Osborne MP
Chancellor of the Exchequer
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London SW1A 2HQ

July 15 2010

Dear Mr Osborne

The future of Warm Front

The End Fuel Poverty Coalition (EFPC) – an alliance of environmental, poverty and consumer organisations – wrote to you on 17 June. We welcomed the government's intention to deliver a national programme of energy efficiency measures to the country's homes and referred to the importance of integrating Warm Front into such a programme.

We asked you to announce in the June 22 Budget continued and increased funding for the Warm Front scheme beyond March 2011 and highlighted the important contribution of Warm Front to the 'green agenda'. We believe that Warm Front must remain in place until a new scheme is developed as part of an integrated national programme. If the government keeps to the 2011 deadline, Warm Front will have to stop taking on new clients within the next few months due to the high demand for this popular scheme.

The recent report of the Government's Fuel Poverty Advisory Group reinforced our message. It recommended that "funding for the current Warm Front scheme is extended to 2012 to ensure continuity of support to individuals in need and to sustain the infrastructure that will be needed up to 2016. The Warm Front scheme must remain in place until a successor grant based scheme has been developed."

We were therefore disappointed that the June 22 budget did not make an announcement on future funding for Warm Front. We understand that the Government now intends to consider this as part of the Autumn spending review process. We also understand that the Government is examining how the post 2012 supplier obligation can better support low income households and hard to treat properties.

We recognise that there is always room for improvement. The EFPC itself advocates the installation of a much more extensive package of measures in the homes of fuel poor households, particularly those living in off-gas and solid walled homes, than that currently offered by Warm Front. However, much of Warm Front's limitations relate to the budget it has available and to the challenge of improving the highly energy inefficient homes most fuel poor households live in.

In the meantime, we must stress the urgency of the situation. Warm Front and the predecessor Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (introduced by the 1992-97 Government) is a flagship programme for tackling fuel poverty. It is essential to the health of the energy efficiency industry. It is essential to the health of many highly vulnerable households. It is essential for meeting carbon reduction targets. We therefore urge the Government to announce the continuation funding for Warm Front at the earliest opportunity, until such times as a replacement grant scheme is introduced.

Yours sincerely