



Note of End Fuel Poverty Coalition meeting Wednesday Feb 3 2010 at Artillery House

Present:

Jonathan Stearn (Chair), William Baker, Emma Carr – Consumer Focus
Caroline Heijne – Admin support and National Right to Fuel Campaign
Mervyn Kohler – Age Concern/Help the Aged
Jenny Holland, Lotte Blair - Association for the Conservation of Energy
Vanessa Stanislas – Disability Alliance
Bob Smytherman - Federation of Private Residents Associations
David Timms - Friends of the Earth
Cerys Roberts – Macmillan Cancer Support
Maria Wardrobe, Darren Shirley - NEA
Alison Purshouse – National Pensioners Convention

Apologies were received from a number of other members of the coalition.

1. Energy Bill update – Jonathan Stearn, CF

- Jonathan Stearn gave a brief update of the Energy Bill. See also EFPC Briefing circulated 28.1.10.
- Key points include:
 - Price support for electricity costs being made mandatory;
 - Broad, general remit at present which CF support as this leaves options open for improvement during consultation on more detailed proposals;
 - Ofgem remit to protect interests of consumers, especially low income, being strengthened.
- Key issues:
 - Government arguing all eligible consumers will benefit by support through electricity bills, even if they are off the gas network;
 - Need to focus on issue of eligibility, CF arguing for adding those eligible for Cold Weather Payments (CWP) and those on benefits with school age children;
 - Concern about level of benefit – price differentials between payment methods may mean that suppliers with highest differentials seem to offer best social tariffs, Ofgem is looking at this – differentials could be big campaigning issue – aiming for online prices to be used as basis for price support.
- Jenny Holland, ACE, reported on their work on energy efficiency and whether the Bill includes this, ie whether “benefit” is seen as more than financial, on basis that it is more effective to provide energy efficiency investment where providing price support.
- Discussion points included:
 - Important that bill gets enacted; danger that if there is a lot of pressure for major changes to bill, it won't get through this Parliament
 - General support for addition of groups eligible for CWP, although this would still

exclude groups such as recently diagnosed cancer patients and the terminally ill;
Issue of price differentiation, cross subsidisation and justifications;
Inclusion of energy efficiency investment as benefit under the Bill;
Concern about apparent complacency of Minister and DECC civil servants;
Timing for any action, eg during passage through Lords.

ACTION: **JS** to circulate CF reports on social tariff data and extending price support eligibility, when ready;

 JS to keep coalition informed of CF action to reduce payment method differentials;

 CR will check benefit criteria for people with cancer in relation to CWP;

 All to be prepared to submit responses to consultation on implementation of bill stages.

2. EFPC Charter – William Baker, CF

- General support for latest version, members asked to send any amendments to WB.
- Discussion of launch event for Charter in House of Commons, linked to end of winter and recent very cold weather. Several offers were made to tie launch in with existing events, e.g. Parliamentary Warm Homes Group
- Discussion points included:
Issue of price differentials and related social tariffs;
Inclusion of demand for private sector regulation on energy efficiency;
Inclusion of timescales for demands;
Issue of Government levying costs of low carbon policies on energy bills, paid for by consumers.
- William also highlighted the ‘five simple pledges’ and asked for comments

ACTION: **All to send any comments on charter and pledges to WB by Feb 17 2010**

 All to get agreement from their organisations to sign up to Charter.

 CH will collect logos and signatures

 EC to progress launch event for Charter.

3. NEA update – Darren Shirley, NEA

- In Jan 2009, NEA had launched their national energy efficiency scheme, drawing all current programmes together, to improve communication and get to target householders. There is broad consensus on the effectiveness of area based retrofit programmes, the need for local authorities to be in the lead and high standards for energy efficiency. Also proposing a financial leverage body.
- There is support from Parliamentary Committees, Audit Commission, SDC, and Existing Homes Alliance. NEA talking with Conservative representatives and Dept of Communities and Local Government about minimum standards, Decent Homes post 2010 and private sector regulation.
- The Home Energy Management Strategy consultation document is due out at the end of Feb;
JS suggested that, if was out in time, necessary changes could be made to EFPC Charter.

ACTION: **DS** to circulate NEA campaign document – also available on NEA website

4. Fuel Poverty and the Election

- This was not discussed in any detail.

5. Future direction of Coalition

- JS said he would circulate a paper on options/possibilities, and it would be worth setting up a smaller working group to look at this.
- Both ACE and NEA offered secretariat facilities.
- VS said that she had had good experience of developing poverty coalitions and would be happy to share experience.
- Issues raised included objectives, post election, and where fuel poverty is on members own agendas.

ACTION: JS to send out options paper for Coalition future.

CH to ask for volunteers for working group and set up meeting

6. AOB

1. Raised in context of Coalition future, ACE working on using Twitter effectively and wanted to revitalise Coalition's presence on web.
- VS reported that the End Child Poverty coalition was closing at the end of March, possibly being taken over by Save the Children.
 - The Home Energy Management Strategy consultation document is due out at the end of Feb;
JS suggested that, if was out in time, necessary changes could be made to EFPC Charter.

Date and time of next meeting

Date: Week of Mar 8 2010 – CH to circulate options.