

Time for Action: Priorities for next Scottish Government to tackle Fuel Poverty, Climate Change, and a Ensure Just Transition in Scotland

As Scotland approaches its upcoming parliamentary election, Changeworks urges all political parties to put the needs of people and the planet at the forefront of their manifestos.

For four decades, we have supported households across Scotland to live in affordably warm, healthy homes and with lower carbon emissions.

Changeworks calls for leadership to tackle the interlinked challenges of fuel poverty, climate change, and the need for a just transition to a sustainable future that delivers opportunity and affordability.

The next Scottish Government must:

- Tackle fuel poverty: Commit to a national Fuel Poverty Strategy with a clear, deliverable plan
- Make homes more energy efficient: Implement robust legislation to accelerate home decarbonisation and provide incentives for householders and the supply chain to take action alongside investment in sustainable home heating
- Provide support services: Invest in local and national support services
- Commit to funding: Sustained investment, adjusted for inflation, to maintain delivery, support employment and secure long-term savings through improved health outcomes and reduced emissions
- Reform electricity pricing: Support reforms to electricity pricing to ensure fairness for households and unlock potential of clean energy
- Champion Fair Work: Ensure Fair Work principles are embedded across sectors for an equitable, just transition to a sustainable future

The benefits of these actions will improve the health and wellbeing of people across Scotland, ease cost of living pressures for many households, and grow Scotland's economy.

1. Fuel Poverty Crisis: An Unacceptable Reality

29% of households in Scotland are living in fuel poverty, with acute impacts in the Highlands and Islands. Many families face impossible choices between heating and essentials. A Changeworks survey showed that 50% of Scots say their homes are cold, with over a third (37%) very concerned about being able to afford their energy bills this winter.

Fuel poverty is disproportionately high in the social housing sector, where 49% of households are affected. Registered social landlords play a critical role in keeping homes warm and affordable, yet many face increasing pressures to improve energy efficiency while supporting tenants through rising costs. Targeted support for social landlords must be strengthened to ensure homes are warm, healthy and affordable for those most at risk.

We call on all parties to commit to a Fuel Poverty Strategy that sets clear, deliverable targets and ensures no household is left behind through a clear, deliverable plan. Eradicating fuel poverty is a matter of social justice, public health and wellbeing.

2. Climate Change: Delivering on Ambition

Climate change is reshaping lives and communities across Scotland, from rising energy costs to extreme weather events. Action on climate change can deliver real, immediate benefits for households, particularly those least able to absorb additional costs.

Slow progress in establishing policies on how we heat our homes and make them more energy efficiency has been creating uncertainty. We need to see clear standards set for all tenures and timelines for implementation, alongside the legislation and regulations to ensure action is taken.

We urge all parties to back robust legislation and regulation to make homes more energy efficient, prioritising sustainable heating and targeted support for vulnerable households.

3. Investment in Support Services: A Lifeline for Householders

Support services – such as advice, advocacy and funding for upgrades - are a lifeline for households facing high energy costs, cold homes and poor health. 64% of Scots are very concerned about health problems linked to cold or poorly insulated homes, with 73% concerned about high energy costs.

Well-designed support helps households reduce energy costs, improve comfort and safeguard physical and mental health. This is particularly vital for remote, rural and island communities, where homes are harder to heat, fuel options are limited and energy costs are higher. Sustained investment in local and national support services is critical to ensuring communities across Scotland can flourish.

4. Funding Commitment: Protecting Progress in Challenging Times

We acknowledge the pressures on public budgets, but political parties must commit to protecting and expanding funding for fuel poverty and climate action programmes. There is high public support (71%) for renewable home energy, and 65% of Scots are concerned the UK is not investing quickly enough in sustainable energy.

Sustained, inflation-linked, investment is essential to maintain delivery, support skilled employment across Scotland and secure long-term savings through improved health outcomes and reduced emissions. We need a strong signal to the market, helping to stimulate investment in sustainable technologies that will, over time, increase economic activity and employment opportunities. Cuts or stagnation in support risk reversing hard-won progress and deepening inequalities.

5. Electricity Pricing Reform: Fairness and Clean Heating

Current electricity pricing structures often penalise the fuel-poor and act as a barrier to adopting cleaner heating technologies. High electricity prices risk undermining their impact and discouraging households from switching away from gas.

We urge all parties to support reforms to electricity pricing that ensure fairness and unlock the full potential of clean heating.

6. Just Transition and Fair Work: A Shared Opportunity

Changeworks recognises that tackling climate change must go hand in hand with delivering Fair Work. We believe a just transition requires high-quality, secure, and equitable green jobs that ensure no one is left behind. We need an inclusive approach that ensures workers, communities, and vulnerable groups are active participants and beneficiaries of Scotland's energy transition.

By embedding Fair Work, skills development and community benefits in climate action, we can deliver a transition that is fair and resilient, while unlocking high-quality jobs, economic opportunity and lasting benefits for communities across Scotland.

Making a Difference

Over our last strategic plan, 2022-25, we supported over 200,000 households, providing invaluable energy advice, fuel poverty support and installing energy efficiency measures in homes. During this time, we also saved 996,677 tonnes of carbon through our services, including Warmworks.

That means helping people like Hannah. Hannah struggles with poor mental health and ended up with energy debt of over £19,000 from a former address. With us advocating to her supplier, we proved that the debt was wrong, and the supplier reduced it by over £14,000. As a result, Hannah's wellbeing improved and we are continuing to work with Hannah to ensure she's managing her energy use and staying affordably warm and comfortable at home.

In 2024-25, our Tenant Energy Support service scaled its support for housing associations, helping tackle fuel poverty while supporting Scotland's transition to more energy efficient housing. Since its

launch in 2024, Tenant Energy Support has supported nine housing associations and up to 20,000 tenants. The service has already delivered significant financial, carbon and wellbeing benefits for tenants, with 69% now feeling confident dealing with energy issues, up from 35%, and savings of over £50,000 achieved.

As the largest managing agent of Area Based Schemes, we've seen the impact retrofit - from insulation through to heat pump installation – has on householders. Fife Council's multi-measure retrofit project upgrading 186 homes helped households save up to £226 a year on electricity, stay warmer and more comfortable and reduce fuel poverty, proving how targeted home improvements make a real difference.

Time for Action

Scotland has built deep expertise in tackling fuel poverty and making homes more energy efficient, developed through years of practical delivery at scale. From area-based energy efficiency programmes to national advice and support services, this experience has positioned Scotland as a leader within the UK. Maintaining momentum is essential - not only to protect progress at home, but to champion what works, share learning and help shape effective policy and delivery across the UK.

The decisions made in the next parliament will shape lives for generations. We urge all political parties to commit to bold, practical action on fuel poverty, climate change and a just transition that provides wider benefits include improved health and wellbeing alongside economic opportunity.

Together, we can build a Scotland where everyone lives in an affordably warm, healthy home; where climate action delivers fairness and economic opportunities as well as ambition; and where people and communities are supported through change, not left behind by it.

Changeworks stands ready to support this journey and calls on all candidates and parties to rise to the challenge.

Yours sincerely,

Josiah Lockhart,

Chief Executive,

Changeworks