

## Home Energy Statement

### Introduction

The Council's Standard Delivery Plan, April 2005 highlights that the principal area of failure in respect of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) is energy efficiency. The need for an Energy Strategy was noted in the Council's Local Housing Strategy and work continues to develop a programme of works which will enable SHQS energy targets to be met. A summary of the range of projects currently being developed is noted below. Further information is also provided in the action plan on Fuel Poverty.

### 1. Future Housing Investment Programmes

Future Housing Investment Programmes will continue to implement the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) strategy by continuing programmes of central heating installation, double glazing and insulation in Council houses. The Council's Housing Investment Programme 2005/6 – 2007/8 makes provision for work to over 2000 dwellings in respect of energy efficiency measures.

### 2. Extending the Gas Network

There are a number of areas within the Council's boundaries that do not currently have access to a gas supply. Hallglen is an area which has been identified by the Council and Transco where the gas main can be extended. There are just fewer than 180 tenants in Hallglen and the vast majority are keen to accept a gas supply and gas central heating system. This assists the Council in meeting its Fuel Poverty targets as the tenants should save between £48 (3 apt. flat) and £268 (6 apt house) per year by changing from electric storage heating to natural gas. This project is now on site. Consideration is currently being given to the feasibility of progressing projects in other areas, initially within 2km of an existing pipeline.

There are a range of positive benefits that arise from extending the gas pipeline:

- Environmental benefits in the form of reduced carbon emissions as a result of moving to gas fired heating systems.
- An increased choice of fuels for householders.
- A more flexible, cost effective, energy efficient heating choice for householders.
- Installation of gas supplies would be cost neutral to the Council when utilising the opportunity for external funding.
- Helping to implement the Council's responsibility to eradicate Fuel Poverty.
- Helping to meet the Council's Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) responsibilities.

### 3. CHP, Salmon Court, Bo'ness

This is a recently completed project where a small scale 'Combined Heat and Power' (CHP) generator has been installed to replace a central gas boiler plant. The residual heat from the production of electricity is circulated to all 27 properties which form a sheltered housing scheme. The residents are all elderly and in their homes for an extended period each day. They will now benefit from lower

energy costs which are paid in conjunction with their rent. Falkirk Council is now the supplier of the residents' electricity and this is being offered at a competitive rate thus reducing the fuel costs for a group of people that can be vulnerable to fuel poverty.

#### **4. CHP, Callander Park, Falkirk**

Falkirk Council has been successful in its bid to install a CHP scheme to serve 5 blocks of high rise flats in the Callander Park area of Falkirk. These flats are predominately occupied by elderly people and the CHP will ensure that no householder spends more than approximately £5 per week on energy costs thus eliminating fuel poverty for all of the householders. The blocks are also due to benefit from external cladding ensuring the buildings meet the SHQS. This project lies within the 'Town Centre' ward which has been identified by the EAS/Alembic research Fuel Poverty Mapping initiative as a high risk area.

#### **5. West Carmuir – Affordable Energy from Fresh Air**

These four properties, at West Carmuir Loan in Bonnybridge, are of non-traditional construction and are in an exposed location without a gas supply. As a result it is very difficult to heat these properties at an acceptable price, resulting in a high risk of some of the residents falling into the fuel poverty bracket.

As part of an upgrading package the properties are to benefit from the "Heat King" 'Air Source Heat Pump' (ASHP) heating system which uses the natural supply of air to generate heat for the home and is four times more efficient than electric central heating. Running costs will be further reduced by installing a Swift Wind Turbine on each property. A Fuel Poverty Assessment is currently being undertaken to confirm running costs before the installation and monitoring will then continue for one year after the Heat King units and Swift turbines have been installed.

It is hoped that this technology should pave the way for further installations in areas where there is no access to the gas network, thus reducing the problems of fuel poverty in rural households (approximately 7259 of Falkirk's total housing stock of 65,990 are considered rural).

#### **6. EEC Funding**

Linking in with the HRA Investment Programme and the requirements of the SHQS a number of projects are being put together that will be enhanced by the provision of EEC funding from the fuel companies. These projects include:

- Cavity wall and loft insulation programme to around 9,000 houses incorporating the offer of a 'Benefit Health Check'.
- Exchanging existing electric and solid fuel heating systems for a modern, efficient gas central heating system.
- External cladding for the high rise flats in Falkirk.

These projects all combine to tackle two of the causes of Fuel Poverty, namely improved thermal efficiency of the stock and to encourage income maximisation amongst tenants.

## **7. Assessing the Extent of Fuel Poverty**

The Council has appointed a Fuel Poverty Officer who will undertake assessments of fuel poverty in the area. This will allow a benchmark position to be determined against which progress can be measured and appropriate initiatives and interventions developed.

More specifically, an interrogation of data provided through the National Fuel Poverty Mapping initiative will allow activities to be targeted at households identified as being most vulnerable and in need of assistance.

## **8. Fuel Poverty Advice & Information**

### *Fuel Poverty Leaflet*

The leaflet “Take Action on Fuel Poverty - A guide for staff” is a joint publication between Falkirk Council, Forth Valley NHS and the Strathclyde and Central Energy Efficiency Centre. This leaflet is for frontline staff members and contains background information on the importance of fuel poverty, signs to look out for during face to face contact with householders as well as contact details for various organisations.

Briefing sessions are being carried out with frontline staff in order to discuss the issues surrounding Fuel Poverty and why it is an issue that requires to be addressed.

### *Fuel Poverty Advice Sheet*

Arrangements are also under way to produce a leaflet that will be publically available to provide key information and details on fuel poverty agencies such as dedicated organisations, fuel providers etc.

## **9. Preferred Supplier Arrangements**

Investigations are currently taking place regarding the benefits of setting up a ‘Preferred Supplier Arrangement’ with a power company specifically to deal with void properties. This would benefit tenants in terms of a smoother transition when moving to a new tenancy. They will however still have the right to change supplier after 28 days. A preferred supplier agreement may not directly reduce fuel poverty but indirectly the funding that is gained from the arrangement can be used towards innovative projects which are specifically targeted at this group.

## **10. Owner Occupier Insulation Project**

This project is aimed solely at owner occupiers in the Council area who have been identified by the Strathclyde and Central Energy Efficiency Advice Centre as having no insulation or insulation below the current standard in their property. There are around 7500 properties that fall into this category.

The Council plans to work with Scottish Gas to encourage Owners to install insulation, which is offered at a reduced cost (subsidised through EEC2). Owners who are in receipt of a benefit will be able to have this insulation fitted free of charge. It is hoped that around 15% of those targeted will take up this offer.

## **11. Homepack Scheme**

Proposals are currently being considered for a project funded by Scottish Power through EEC2 and specifically aimed at improving the energy efficiency of properties which either:

- Are unsuitable for cavity wall insulation.
- Already have cavity wall insulation installed.

The measures funded by Scottish Power could include hot water cylinder jackets, draught proofing kits, radiator reflector panels and low energy light bulbs.

A proposal is currently being put together utilising the skills of the Council's Employment Training Unit as a means of taking this project forward. By improving the thermal efficiency of properties, the risk of fuel poverty can be reduced while also offering increased employment opportunities to those working on the scheme.