

Energy: turning up the heat on your MP

Our energy system is in a mess. The UK gets three-quarters of its electricity from dirty fossil fuels, contributing to dangerous climate change. This leaves households exposed to sudden rises in gas prices. Meanwhile, our leaky homes waste huge amounts of energy – costing us money, leaving many people cold and in fuel poverty, and needlessly increasing carbon emissions.

We need to change where we get our energy from, and how much of it we use. We need to do this fast. And that's why we need people to turn up the heat on their MPs, to get them to fix our broken energy system.

We've got a big opportunity right now. The Government has just introduced its new Energy Bill into Parliament. This will determine the future of our energy supply for the next generation, and is the most crucial piece of climate change legislation this Parliament.

A coalition of groups working on clean energy and fuel poverty are urging the Government to overhaul the UK's energy system in two key ways:

- 1. Introduce a target into the new Energy Bill to take the carbon out of our electricity by 2030.** The Energy Bill fails to set the clear direction needed to 'decarbonise' the UK's electricity – to phase out polluting fossil fuels. We are working with MPs from all parties to get an amendment tabled as the Bill is debated that will put a 2030 decarbonisation target at its heart – cleaning up our power and generating more green jobs for Britain. Investors need this long-term certainty if they're to set up businesses that will bring those jobs to this country. For more information on the proposed target and the Energy Bill, check out this briefing: http://www.foe.co.uk/resource/briefings/energy_bill_update_dec.pdf
- 2. Tackle energy waste, cut bills and reduce fuel poverty through a huge energy efficiency programme – paid for by 'carbon taxes'.** It is estimated that the Treasury will receive around £4bn annually from these taxes on pollution over the next 15 years. Our coalition of health, consumer, environment and children's groups is calling for the Government to use the revenue it will receive from these taxes to boost spending on energy efficiency schemes for low-income and fuel poor households. (A household is defined as being fuel poor if it spends more than 10% of its income on fuel for adequate heating.) If taxes are re-invested in this way it can take 9 out of 10 households out of fuel poverty. For more information, see www.energybillrevolution.org.uk

Many MPs already back these proposals – but there are more who need to be convinced. If we get enough MPs onboard, we can push the Government into making the changes needed. So even if you've never dreamt of lobbying your MP before – please consider doing so on this. It's time to make them listen

What you can do to lobby your MP

Lobbying an MP might seem daunting at first, but it's only right that our elected representatives listen to the public's concerns! There are lots of ways you can bend the ear of your MP...

You can act on your own, or you can work through any local organisation you belong to.

Action by your group

In the first three months, the 'Energy We Can All Afford' coalition is running a series of public meetings across the UK with local MPs and other national speakers. We are doing this as the Energy Bill goes through Parliament. We are looking to work with local organisations to help us make this happen and generate interest and action.

Public meetings

We can help you set up a meeting. We can offer:

- help in contacting MPs and other speakers
- guidance and support in planning meetings and events
- leaflets and posters ready for you to add your details (we can help with printing)
- information materials and advice
- guidance on how to contact other organisations that support us and are interested in these events (e.g. Age UK, Disability Rights UK, National Pensioners' Convention, MENCAP, MS Society, the National Children's Bureau) and on how to contact them,

Lobbying your MP

If you cannot organise a public meeting you can lobby your MP in various ways. You can invite them to a smaller meeting to meet members of your group and perhaps others to tell them your concerns and discuss the issues.

You can also simply attend your MP's local surgery – most MPs hold meetings for constituents at the end of each week. Check your MP's website for details. If a few people go together you can show that there is more local concern

Work with a local green business.

The green economy is employing increasing numbers of people. Why not show your MP that there are green jobs at stake in your local area by linking up with green businesses – such as a solar installation company or insulation firm – and arranging a workplace visit? We can help you locate local green businesses.

Action on your own

If you've got two minutes

- **Email them**, asking them to support the above proposals. Friends of the Earth has a current email action which you can take to contact your MP, here: http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press_for_change/cbe_press_change_sept_3699_5.html.

If you've got ten minutes

- **Write them a letter.** We have template letters which you can personalise.

If you've got a bit more time

Visit your MP and lobby them – most MPs hold meetings for constituents at the end of each week. Check your MP's website for details.

If you'd like help and information contact us: info@energywecanallafford.org