

Proposed Cross Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Consumer Protection for Home Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Inaugural Meeting

**Wednesday, 4th October, from
17:30 to 18:30**

Room Q1.03

Minutes

Attendees:

Clare Haughey MSP, Ivan McKee MSP (Apologies Ross Greer MSP & A. Cole-Hamilton MSP)

Citizen's Advice Scotland:	Kate Morrison, Marcus Wilson
Energy Saving Trust:	Elaine Waterson, Laura McGadie, Philip Sellwood
Energy Action Scotland:	Helen Melone
Scottish Power:	Michelle Cullis
Scottish Gas Centrica:	Alex Anderson
Office of Clare Haughey:	Gerry Chambers, Sean Rodgers

Apologies: Hamilton CAB, Chris Bell (SSE), Joe Brady (Green Deal North Glasgow Action Group), David Burns (Wetherby Building Systems)

Clare Haughey:

Constituents in Blantyre, Rutherglen with solar panels accumulating huge debts. Helms are the culprit company (with a history of scams in other markets) – they received the largest fine ever given for cold calling - £200,000 - then went bust. Constituents were left with solar panels with a number of major issues e.g. they were incompatible with their meter, not receiving promised amount of free electricity, green deal debt was preventing property sales in some instances. CH feels there was clear targeting of ex-council houses with an older population. Approach taken was cold calls and hard selling, people left feeling conned. Complaints to Green Deal Ombudsman gained no real feedback, financial ombudsman felt there was a case but there have been no examples of resolution in this area (that they are aware of).

Ivan McKee:

50 or more cases in constituency – major issue there was EWI being installed without a building warrant, without which consumers can't insure their home and can't sell home.

Cllr Graham Campbell:

Similar EWI issues in Glasgow (area?). A distinct lack of scrutiny and enforcement or any consequences for dodgy traders. Council are proposing test case to ensure that fitting has been appropriate / sufficient (to avoid lots of houses having to take their cladding off) and to award warrants post installation

Action being undertaken:

Numerous public meetings

Facebook page launched

Work locally from CAB and Trading Standards.

Local CAB in Blantyre and Hamilton approached advocate to determine legality of decisions.

CPG will largely function as awareness raising forum for information sharing and gathering. Not lobbying or campaigning group. Could feed into CAS project.

Some additional issues:

- The Green deal finance company has now been privatised. Since privatisation of green deal ombudsman sending out letters saying they can't help speak to GD finance company who then send a letter saying they are reviewing the case they may be wiping debts but not refunding previous payments (view from Gerry)
- For many their FiT was unknowingly signed over to a third party, which has recently gone bust.
- There is a nationwide issue over mis-selling of green deal measures, similar work in Wales and England ongoing to address problem
- EAS want to see quality check/control improved
- Green deal repayments must go through energy companies and consumers find their supplier doesn't know much about them. If you stop the GD finance part of the bill you then accumulate debt with energy companies.
- Calculation of energy bills was incorrect, many victims were low energy users so should have been told they wouldn't likely receive benefits.
- Can lessons feed into the Each Home Counts review by 2018 (speak to Peter Broad)
- Shorter life CPG to maintain focus aims although will only meet 3 times per year and will not produce any outputs – information sharing as aim. Unlikely to cover Heat. Subgroups/work groups can be set up

Comments:

Alex - Energy companies felt there was a role for pay as you save but were dragged into green deal finance despite reservations. Michelle - Suppliers doing what they can in terms of supporting debt recovery.

Graham: met with Welsh counterparts who have been campaigning around the same issues. CPG will be starting at Westminster with Huw Thomas from Plaid

AP: Peter Broad leads Each Home Counts consumer protection group - contact

AP: Potential evidence via call for evidence at CAS?

AP: Email to confirm secretariat