

Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy

2019-2023 Consultation Report

Consultation on this Strategy

Welcome to this consultation document which sets out the draft vision, priorities and actions of the new Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy (AWHEEs) for the Scottish Borders. The AWHEEs covers the period 2019-2023 and sets out our vision for affordable warmth and energy efficiency over the next four years.

We have developed a draft vision and priorities for action with our partners. Before the strategy is finalised, we want to make sure that local people, communities and stakeholders have their say on whether these priorities will make a positive contribution to meeting the needs of people in the Borders.

Throughout the consultation there are questions on each of the areas we are seeking your views on, with an opportunity for you to contribute your response. As we aim to understand who is responding to the consultation, there are introductory questions on whether you are an individual or representing a group, which tenure you live in and the area of the Borders you are based in and this information helps us build a picture of who we are engaging with. If you would like a full copy of the Strategy, please request this.

Overview

Scottish Borders Council is committed to creating a region that is fair for everyone and where we all have an equal and positive chance to succeed. Tackling fuel poverty will be a key step towards achieving this. Our aim is to provide affordable warmth and healthy homes for everyone living in the Borders.

Our Community Plan, published in May 2018, sets out this commitment to reducing inequalities and one of the key identified outcomes of that plan is that “More people are able to afford to heat their homes”. The Local Housing Strategy (LHS) 2017-2022 is the Council’s key strategic document for planning and delivering initiatives to reduce fuel poverty and improve home energy efficiency. Priority 2 of the LHS is that “More people live in good quality, energy efficient homes”.

The Vision and Priorities

Covering the period 2019-23, the Vision is for **‘more people live in energy efficient and affordably warm homes’**. The Priorities that work towards fulfilling this Vision are:

To collectively work with our partners to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes.

To explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home.

To ensure that the AWHEEs provides opportunities for all in the Scottish Borders.

Consultation question 1

Do you think the three Priorities outlined above will help to deliver the Vision for this Strategy? Are there any priorities that are missing?

Local Context

Fuel poverty occurs when households cannot afford to keep their homes adequately warm because the costs of heating are higher than average and paying for those costs leave them below the poverty line. This affects around 31% of households in the Borders, where the rural nature of the area, the type of housing and the low wage economy, contributes to higher levels than the Scottish average. Teviot and Liddesdale has the highest proportion of homes in a Council Tax band A-C (78.6%), whilst Tweeddale has the least (46.8%). Using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 7 datazones fall into the “20% most deprived” in Scotland: these are located in Hawick Central, Burnfoot, Langlee and Selkirk areas.

There has been a gradual increase in total household expenditure on energy over the last 10 years and approximately one third of properties are off the gas grid. Berwickshire has fewer homes connected by mains gas and consequently, there are more homes dependent on alternative forms of heat; namely, solid fuel, electric heaters and oil. Eildon also has a large proportion of homes that are dependent on electricity, with limited dependency on solid fuels, LPG and oil in comparison to the other localities. 75% of appropriate households have had cavity wall insulation; whilst the level of solid wall insulation for appropriate households is relatively low (and in line with the Scottish average). Houses eligible for solid wall insulation account for approximately two thirds of the households in the Borders.

Consultation question 2

What opportunities and challenges does the local context of the Scottish Borders present with regards to affordable warmth and home energy efficiency?

Defining Affordable Warmth, Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency

Affordable warmth is the ability for a homeowner to heat their home to an adequate level to achieve household comfort and health without incurring a debt. In Scotland, a household is considered to be in fuel poverty if it spends more than 10% of household income on fuel, and in extreme fuel poverty if it spends more than 20%. A new definition is currently being drafted by Scottish Government. There are four main factors that influence whether a household is in fuel poverty are household income, the cost of fuel, energy efficiency and, the use of the heating systems in the home.

Policy and Strategy Context and Ongoing work on Affordable Warmth

There are strong linkages between national and local policies and strategies and these have shaped the policy landscape for which the AWHEEs would sit within. There is a wealth of ongoing work that is improving the quality of life for many residents in terms of providing affordable warmth, advice and support.

Home Energy Scotland (HES) is funded by the Scottish Government to provide free and impartial advice on ways to save energy, reduce fuel bills and make homes cheaper and easier to heat. They also offer income maximisation services such as signposting and referring for benefit checks and tariff support, as well as signposting and referring customers to their switching services if they want to find out about switching energy supplier. From 2015/16 – 17/18 there were 13,660 total advice interactions in the Scottish Borders that led to 4,143 referrals. These referrals have included loans, Warmer Homes Scotland referrals, Social Tariffs, Area Based Fuel Poverty Schemes and Citrus Energy Switching.

Over 1,600 householders who live in the Scottish Borders have been referred to the Warmer Homes Scotland scheme. The scheme provides grant funding for insulation, efficient heating and renewable technologies in the homes of households who are struggling with the cost of high energy bills. The average annual fuel bill savings for householders who have had energy efficiency measures installed is £395 per year, which is 9% higher than the national average.

Home Energy Efficiency Programme Scotland: Area Based Schemes is one of the main fuel poverty programmes of work that SBC are involved with. It is a grant award made available by Scottish Government for local authorities to develop and deliver fuel poverty programmes in areas they identify as having high fuel poverty. Programmes typically include external and internal wall insulation installation and cavity wall insulation.

Energy Efficient Standard for Social Housing (ESSH) aims to improve the energy efficiency of social housing in Scotland. Social landlords are required to reach a set energy efficiency rating for a household based on the housing type and fuel type used to heat it.

Lastly, the Energy Efficient Scotland pilot project in Peebles – the Change Works in Peebles hub – focuses specifically on behavioural change and is engaging and supporting local householders and businesses to reduce energy consumption and fuel bills, as well as increasing the uptake of energy efficient measures. To date, over 900 people have visited the hub (this includes repeat visits and multiple person visits); there have been 352 individual household requests for support.

Consultation question 3

What further support could Scottish Borders Council provide that could benefit those being affected by fuel poverty?

Main Challenges, Barriers and Emerging Priorities in the AWHEEs

A summary of the main challenges, barriers and emerging priorities for the AWHEEs are outlined in Figure 1. These developed through the review of data and literature relating to existing performance against increasing affordable warmth and energy efficiency in the Borders, alignment with ongoing and future Scottish Government strategy and the locality profile for the Scottish Borders. They were also

verified through engagement with wider partners and stakeholders across the region. By drawing attention to these challenges and barriers, the priorities for the Strategy started to emerge. Ensuring that the Strategy is fit-for-purpose is a particularly important priority, given the rural qualities of the region, the ageing population and the challenges presented with existing fuel poverty and off gas regions.

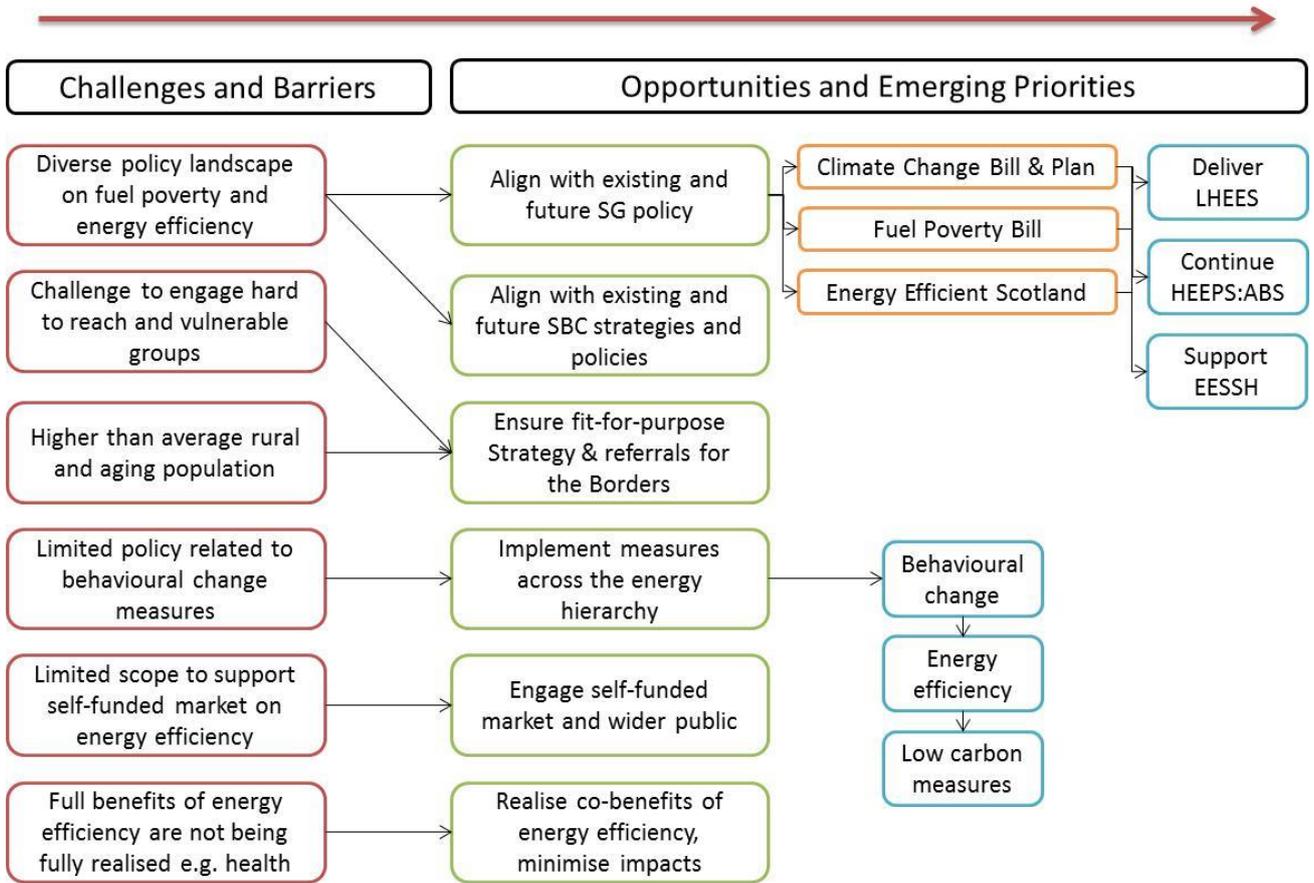


Figure 1: Overview of the Challenges, Issues and Emerging Priorities for the AWHEEs

Consultation question 4

What do you think are the main issues and barriers to increasing affordable warmth in the Scottish Borders?

Consultation question 5

What do you think are the main issues and barriers to increasing home energy efficiency in the Scottish Borders?

The Affordable Warmth and Home Energy Efficiency Strategy

This next Section sets out a series of Priorities that work towards fulfilling the Strategy’s Vision. For each Priority there are a series of Outcomes, which should be achieved during the duration of the Strategy. There are also a series of Strategic Actions for each Priority that cover actions specific for SBC and for wider stakeholders.

Priority 1: To collectively work with our partners to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes

The priority here is that the Scottish Borders are able to collectively work together to improve affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes. With the release of the new Fuel Poverty Bill and the Energy Efficient Scotland Route Map by the Scottish Government there is considerable effort and interest in delivering energy efficiency and affordable warmth to all households across Scotland. Success will be determined by delivering on the Strategic Outcomes and by actions that can attract funding for and deliver mechanisms towards achieving national Government priorities.

The Outcomes for Priority 1 are:

<p>1. Deliver successful projects under the Energy Efficient Scotland programme</p>	<p>2. Fuel poverty in the Scottish Borders decreases</p>	<p>3. Social housing meets EESSH 1 target and works productively to meet EESSH 2 target</p>
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The Actions for Priority 1 are:

- 1.1 Continue to deliver Energy Efficient Scotland projects in the Tweeddale Locality.
- 1.2 Continue to develop and deliver a LHEES for Peebles.
- 1.3 Continue to attract funding for, and deliver HEEPS:ABS.
- 1.4 Identify new and existing schemes to leverage funding to support the fuel poor.
- 1.5 Apply for future funding to expand the Energy Efficient Scotland projects in the Borders out into other Localities and towns.
- 1.6 RSLs to ensure all properties comply with EESSH1 & 2 Standards and identify and support funding opportunities where appropriate.
- 1.7 Proactively inform private landlords of requirements for Energy Efficient Scotland and engage further to outline support, resources, funding opportunities and advice.
- 1.8 SBC colleagues, Scottish Government, and wider delivery partners to work collectively to understand better approaches to monitor progress against Energy Efficient Scotland, fuel poverty and LHEES targets.
- 1.9 Use local intelligence, the Borders Home Energy Database and mapping to target areas and tenures eligible for energy efficiency improvements and fuel poverty support.
- 1.10 Gather data relating to the new fuel poverty definition to ensure that the AWHEEs remains fit for purpose.
- 1.11 Write and maintain a Statement of Intent for the ECO Flexible Eligibility Local Authority scheme.
- 1.12 Ensure the Borders Home Energy Forum remains fit for purpose in terms of membership, networks and priorities.

Consultation question 6

Do you think that the key outcomes and actions in Priority 1 will help to ensure that the Scottish Borders are collectively working towards improving affordable warmth and energy efficiency in homes? Are there any barriers that will stop us delivering these actions?

Priority 2: To explore wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home

This Priority focuses on wider measures, approaches and mechanisms that are able to support poorer households and energy inefficient homes. In particular it outlines wider measures to address affordable warmth in addition to increasing energy efficiency.

The Outcomes for Priority 2 are:

1. Increase in referrals to trusted organisations on advice relating to energy efficiency measures and behavioural change; fuel debt advocacy services and; income maximisation and money advice

2. Operate a thriving website as a central point of call for affordable warmth and energy efficiency advice, referral mechanisms and funding opportunities

3. More partners, community hubs and training services are able to provide advice and support on affordable warmth and energy efficiency and host relevant events

The Actions for Priority 2 are:

- 2.1 Explore opportunities to engage and support households in relation to behavioural change, energy efficiency and affordable warmth in the home.
- 2.2 Explore opportunities to engage with households in relation to fuel costs.
- 2.3 Explore opportunities to engage with households in relation to income maximisation.
- 2.4 Collaborating with the SBC Communities and Partnerships team, Social Care and Health and NHS Borders, create a database of intermediary community groups and services that can collaborate with SBC, to equip them with advice, support and referral mechanisms on affordable warmth and energy efficiency.
- 2.5 Apply for grant funding to increase awareness on energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues throughout households.
- 2.6 Develop an increased web presence on the SBC website and on social media to promote energy efficiency and affordable warmth in the home, referral mechanisms and funding opportunities.
- 2.7 RSLs in the Scottish Borders work collectively to create a clear and concise guide to funding for EESSH.

Consultation question 7

Do you think that the key outcomes and actions in Priority 2 will help to ensure that wider measures to better manage energy and increase warmth in the home are utilised? Are there any barriers that will stop us delivering these actions?

Priority 3: To ensure that the AWHEEs provides opportunities for all in the Scottish Borders

The AWHEEs should mean something to all individuals in the Scottish Borders. It should support all tenure types and homeowners to be more energy efficient and to have access to affordable warmth. Additionally, the AWHEEs needs to cut across the full supply chain and provide enablers for all relevant stakeholders to progress and prosper in the opportunities the energy efficiency agenda presents.

The Outcomes for Priority 3 are:

1. Significant increase in the number of referrals to Home Energy Scotland for households that reside in rural, off-gas grid properties and/or contain elderly and vulnerable individuals.

2. Significant increase in the number of referrals to Home Energy Scotland for the self-funded, owner occupied market.

3. Clear support routes to encourage members of the supply chain to engage in energy efficiency work.

The Actions for Priority 3 are:

- 3.1 Ensure all support extends to, and is relevant for rural and/or off-gas grid areas.
- 3.2 Ensure all support extends to, and is relevant for the elderly and vulnerable and; households that are experiencing child poverty.
- 3.3 Explore best practice on engaging the ‘self-funded’ market to develop a programme of encouragement and support for this these homeowners.
- 3.4 Ensure bottlenecks with regards to mixed tenure blocks are minimised.
- 3.5 Explore opportunities to understand better the Scottish Borders energy efficiency supply chain, in terms of challenges, barriers and opportunities to increasing work in this area.
- 3.6 Engage with Borders College to explore opportunities to increase training on energy efficiency measures.
- 3.7 Remain proactive with regards to Borderlands and South of Scotland Economic Partnership funding and projects.
- 3.8 Develop a series of case studies to be used as best practice to incentivise other homeowners to take up and/or invest in energy efficiency in the home.
- 3.9 Develop an evidence base relating to the behaviour in the home post energy efficiency improvement.
- 3.10 Develop an evidence base for engagement to understand better the stages at which homeowners drop out of the energy efficiency ‘journey’ and identify the specific barriers and reasons for their exit.

Consultation question 8

Do you think that they key outcomes and actions in Priority 3 will help to ensure that the Strategy provides opportunities for all in the Scottish Borders? Are there any barriers that will stop us delivering these actions?

Implementation and monitoring

A wider Action Plan that accompanies the full report sets out in further detail the programme of work required to achieve each of the Priorities and Outcomes in the AWHEEs at an annual level, to drive implementation and facilitate monitoring, evaluation and review. The progress will be monitored by the Borders Home Energy Forum, as part of its remit and reported to the LHS Partnership Group.

Whilst the AWHEEs sets out an ambitious framework for action, investment and partnership to increase the home energy efficiency and affordable warmth in the Scottish Borders, it also must be set in the context of the likely resources available to support implementation. The full implementation of the AWHEEs will be subject to major challenges given the major constraints to public sector funding, the scale of resource and capacity required to deliver programmes such as Energy Efficient Scotland and the unknown impacts of factors such as Brexit. This takes place against a backdrop of increasing need for public services and substantial demand for affordably warm and energy efficient housing locally.

Consultation question 9

What actions do you think would have the biggest impact in encouraging an increase in affordable warmth and home energy efficiency in the Borders?

Consultation question 10

What do you think your contribution to increasing affordable warmth and home energy efficiency in the Borders could be?

Consultation question 11

Do you have any other comments you would like to add?