



Action for Warm Homes
NORTHERN IRELAND

supported by



March 2020

NEWSLETTER

COVID-19 / Coronavirus — Update on Delivery and Operations

At National Energy Action NI, our priority is to ensure that everyone is able to live in a warm home. This remains important, particularly when people may be spending more time at home or facing uncertainties regarding income.

We are closely monitoring the current situation regarding COVID-19 / Coronavirus and following the latest Government advice. This means that we will be making some temporary alterations to how we deliver our work, including cancelling events and pausing face-to-face contact. NEA remains open, however, all staff are working from home and we are able to continue the majority of our operations, including maintaining a Telephone Service and developing training via e-learning. Our policy and campaigns work continues, including seeking extra protections for vulnerable energy consumers during these challenging times.

While we will be continuing to operate a phone service as normal, we have made the difficult decision to temporarily limit our face-to-face advice provision to make sure we can properly protect our clients and staff from any risk. We will be working closely with local organisations to support local householders in the community through our Warm and Well Project, where it is possible to do so, without causing unnecessary risks to health for vulnerable households.

In the meantime, we would suggest you contact staff via email or phone as letters may take some time to be answered; contact details can be found on page [ten](#).

The Consumer Council has created a dedicated webpage which is regularly updated with additional support on essential services including home energy: <https://www.consumercouncil.org.uk/coronavirus>.

Please stay safe and follow Public Health and Government guidelines.

Warm regards

Ms. Pat Austin

Director, NEA NI

Chair, NI Fuel Poverty Coalition

What's inside this edition?

NEA Policy Update3—4

NEA Training: Energy in the Home Workshops 5

NEA Training: Available Courses..... 6

NEA/City & Guilds Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness 6281-01 7

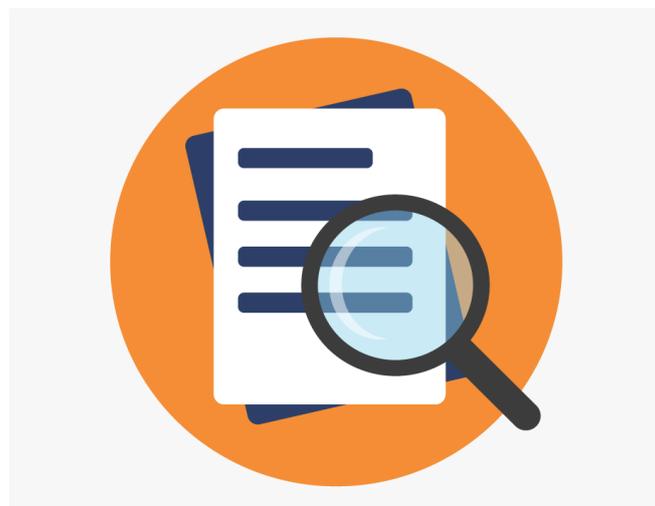
NEA Training: firmus energy..... 7

Fuel Poverty Coalition Update 8

Zero-In on NI Heat: Heat Decarbonization Pathways for Northern Ireland 9

Useful Contacts 10

Contact NEA NI..... 10

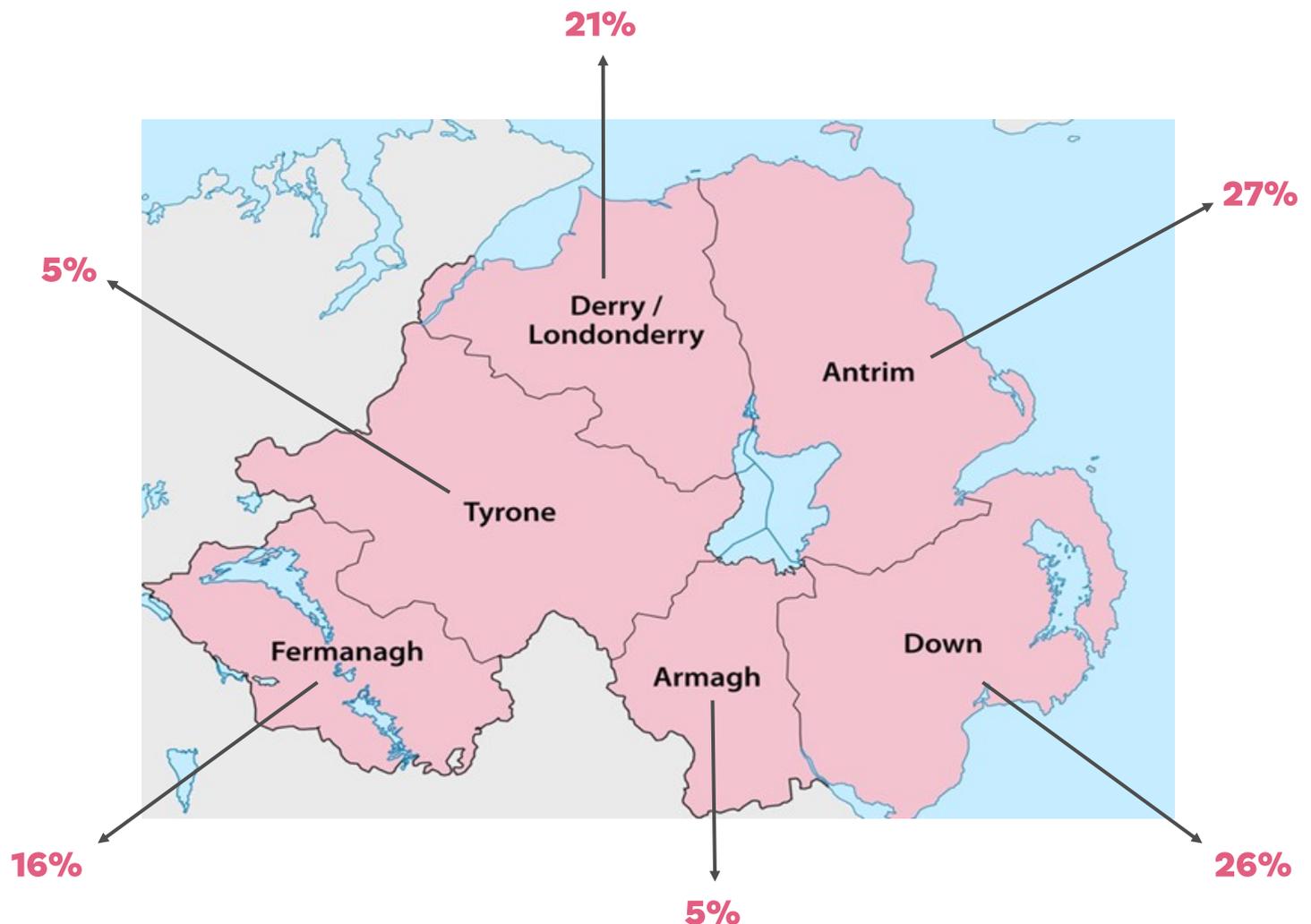


Energy in the Home Workshops by County 2019-20

National Energy Action (NEA) NI, supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) provides **FREE** two hour workshops on energy efficiency in the home for community groups throughout NI.

- From April 2019 to Present: 19 Energy in the Home Workshops were delivered to 439 participants.
- A range a groups undertook the workshop, such as Surestart, Action Mental Health (AMH) and many other community groups throughout Northern Ireland.
- The majority of workshops were delivered in County Down and County Antrim.

We are keen to ensure these workshops are delivered throughout all of Northern Ireland, so if you are based in Counties Tyrone, Armagh or Derry / Londonderry and would like further information, please contact our Training Officer, Nichola MacDougall on 028 9023 9909 or via email to: Nichola.MacDougall@nea.org.uk.



NEA/City & Guilds Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness 6281-01

This three-day course leading to the NEA/City & Guilds 6281-01 Level 3 Award in Energy Awareness has been running for 30 years reaching more than 26,000 people. This remains NEA's most popular course for energy efficiency advisers.

Organisations such as firmus energy, Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and Bryson FutureSkills, local Councils and Industry continue to recognise the benefits of this training for their staff, as it enhances their understanding of fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues, which in turn provides a better service to their customers.

firmus energy

From 2006, firmus energy have committed to send all their staff on the Energy Awareness training. In the last year, 40 firmus energy employees achieved the NEA/City & Guilds Energy Awareness Level 3 qualification.

Testimonials from firmus energy staff:

"The whole course was excellent and very informative."

"I really enjoyed the whole course as it was relevant to work and personal life."

"I can provide better advice when dealing with queries."

"Very useful and interesting course. Hope to provide some information I have learnt to customers."

In September 2019, firmus energy organised a certificate presentation for their staff to congratulate them on achieving this Level 3 qualification.



taking natural gas further
firmus
energy

Richard McErlean (HR Administrator)
receiving his Energy Awareness
Certificate from Michael Scott
(Managing Director, firmus energy), Pat
Austin (Director, NEA NI and Nichola
MacDougall (Training Officer, NEA NI)

Fuel Poverty Coalition Update

The Northern Ireland Fuel Poverty Coalition (FPC) Manifesto for Warmth was updated and reissued last year for the local government elections. Our key asks remain unchanged:

- Make energy efficiency an infrastructure priority;
- Establish a new fuel poverty strategy;
- Save lives by implementing NICE NG6 guidelines;
- Regulate the oil industry; and
- Ensure current and future schemes are effectively targeted.

The manifesto was widely disseminated to elected representatives and stakeholders. To download the most recent version of the Manifesto for Warmth, please click [here](#).

FPC members were also provided with the opportunity to take part in the recent Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP) discussion paper earlier this month. NEA NI, the FPC Secretariat, provided a template response in harmony with the key asks.

We are pleased to see our membership increase to 224 active members and always welcome new members from across the sectors. To become a member and support the FPC, please sign up [here](#).

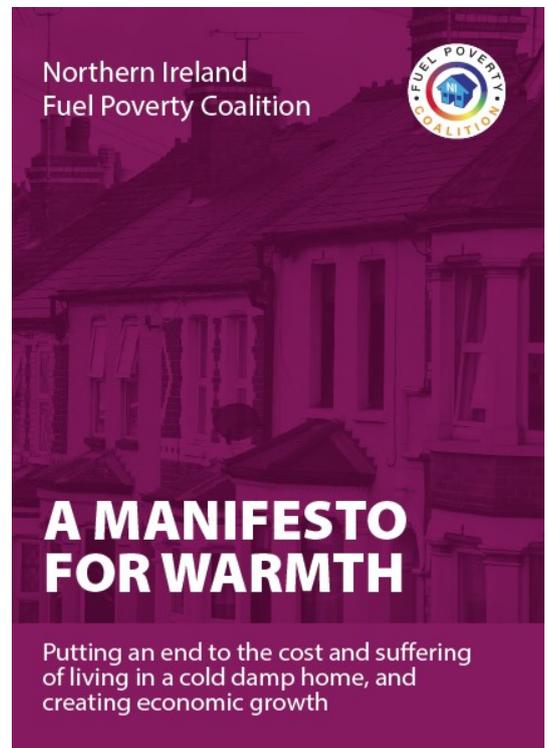
Energy Strategy Consultation Workshop

In March, 50 members of the FPC came together for a workshop to prepare a response to the Department for the Economy (DfE) Energy Strategy Call for Evidence. Four key issues that relate to fuel poverty in Northern Ireland were identified in the context of an energy transition to zero carbon. Members worked on the key aspects of energy policy that they felt impacted on the issue of fuel poverty, and other broader considerations pertinent to the issue.

The four topics deemed of high significance to the FPC were:

1. **Energy Efficiency**
2. **Adoption of New Technologies for Heat**
3. **Affordability and Who Pays**
4. **The Role of the Consumer in the Transition**

A response has been collated and submitted to the DfE, which reflected the insights and contributions from the members of the FPC. To receive a copy of this response, please contact [Lucy Cochrane](#) or [Stephanie Ward](#).



Zero-In on NI Heat

Heat Decarbonization Pathways for NI



The Zero-In on NI-Heat project is a multidisciplinary, women-led project to give alternative views on the opportunities and barriers towards a zero carbon emission heat sector in Northern Ireland (NI).

Ulster University (UU) is the lead partner with the Steering Committee encapsulating female representatives from key organisations within the NI heat sector, including the Department for the Economy (DfE), the Utility Regulator (UR), a renewable industry group (NIRIG), the transmission & distribution system operators (NI Electricity Networks and SONI), NEA Northern Ireland, the Consumer Council, and a public affairs consultancy (Stratagem).

Four stakeholder engagement workshops were organised for this project. Workshops which aimed at identifying the barriers and opportunities to zero carbon heating involved a wide range of stakeholders and focused on the following topics: (i) domestic, (ii) non-domestic, (iii) infrastructure and (iv) energy policy and regulation for heat decarbonisation in NI.

A range of visions for the future heat decarbonisation pathways have been suggested by the NI stakeholders through our expert engagement workshops. One of the prominent visions is that heat decarbonisation in the NI cannot be achieved without consideration of the NI's vulnerable/fuel poor consumers.

Dominated by oil heating and not very efficient houses, Northern Ireland has one of the highest ratings of fuel poverty and faces a very challenging target to decarbonise its heating sector.

Low carbon technologies will require significant investments. Therefore, the challenge is how can households in fuel poverty afford these investments? Another very important aspect of the future heat decarbonisation challenge is requirement for significant investments in the infrastructure, i.e. upgrade of electrical networks, building district heating or infrastructure for transporting "green gases". Northern Ireland must avoid a situation where everyone including people in poverty has to pay for infrastructure, but only a selected portion of the population benefit from these investments through their electric vehicles, solar panels and low carbon heating technologies.

A range of solutions have been discussed by the stakeholders to protect vulnerable people. General taxation vs taxation on electricity; upgrading of energy efficiency standards to the highest levels for vulnerable people; targeted assistance are examples. The socialised costs of energy bills or taxes should be considered when introducing low-carbon heating technologies into NI's energy market.

One of the biggest opportunities in the heat decarbonisation agenda is unlocking consumer flexibility. Fuel poor customers could be those that would be the most motivated to participate in the market and offer their flexibility in return for reduced energy bills.

Still, it will be important to educate consumers on the environmental and technological benefits of low-carbon heating systems. Other than reducing the amount of eco-pollution due to greenhouse gases, low-carbon heating systems have been proven to effectively heat buildings and deliver health benefits.

Multi-vector approaches combining the range of technical solutions and innovative business models, investor engagement, collaborative efforts between wide range of stakeholders and clear coordination through energy policy and regulatory bodies is needed to achieve efficient heat decarbonisation in NI.



Useful Contacts

Age NI
080 8808 7575

Engage with Age
028 9073 5696

Northern Ireland Water
0345 744 0088

Advice NI
028 9064 5919

Consumer Council NI
080 0121 6022

Welfare Reform Helpline
0808 802 0020

Volunteer Now
028 9023 2020

Housing Rights Service
028 9024 5640

**NIE Networks
Customer Helpline**
0345 764 3643



Action for Warm Homes
Northern Ireland

Contact NEA NI

Pat Austin	Director
Lucy Cochrane	Policy & Campaigns Officer
Nichola MacDougall	Training Officer
Hugh McVeigh	Project Coordinator
Jenny Gibson	Benefits Advisor
Stephanie Ward	Business Support Officer

Noel Rice	NEA NI Trustee
David Crothers	↘
Mimi McAlinden	→ NEA NI Advisory Group
Douglas McIlldoon	↗

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