

Scottish Borders Council – Local Heating and Efficiency Strategy (LHEES)

Consultative Draft Document and Local Heating and Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) Plan

Response from Hutton and Paxton Community Council

March 2024

Hutton and Paxton Community Council (HPCC) submit the following questions for consideration. Our main concern is effective communication with residents.

As a Community Council we have difficulty in reaching residents despite the use of our website, Facebook page, WhatsApp groups, community magazine, noticeboards, etc. Clearly SBC has far greater resources and experience in communicating with residents so the strategy for securing engagement would be helpful.

1. Existing level of knowledge about the technology

- 1.1 Does the average person understand the concept of how a heat pump works? e.g. How is cold air from outside converted into warm air inside a building? What additional energy is required?
- 1.2 Are people aware that heat pumps are less efficient, when operated under conditions of very cold or hot temperatures?
- 1.3 Do people know that their properties will require significant insulation to make the heat pumps work efficiently? Obvious questions are who will be paying for the changes required and where are the accredited tradesmen to undertake the work?
- 1.4 How will SBC communicate the content of the LHEES to members of our community?
- 1.5 What is the role of the HPCC in taking this plan forward?

2. Safety Considerations

- 2.1 What consideration has been given to the health implications when a building is insulated (sealed) in order to conserve heat supplied by a heat pump?
- 2.2 How safe is pressurised refrigerant, in the event of a leak, on the output side of a compressor, in a heat pump system? What type of refrigerants are used in today's heat pumps? – (The pressurised liquid / vapour on the output side of a heat pump's compressor can be around 225-250 psi (15.5 – 17.2 bar))
- 2.3 How can a spill of a heat pump's liquid Freon be safely contained in domestic use? What additional pressure might be put on emergency services' resources?

3. Cost Implications

- 3.1 What will the average cost be to upgrade properties and install heat pumps into social housing and wholly-owned properties? (Is there additional information in the LHEES Delivery Plan?)

- 3.2 How will the provision of addressing 'Fuel Poverty' across the Scottish Borders be financed and by who?
- 3.3 How will the alternative fuel (wood, oil) users and providers fare in rural areas? Currently the sale and purchase of heating oil and wood for heating must be a source of tax revenue – VAT – for The Scottish Government?
- 3.4 How will the cost of additional / replacement resources required to support the role out of electrical heating be funded?
- 3.5 Has there been an independent, objective study of the most efficient heat pumps on the market; that are also future proof? Potentially, some heat pumps have only an operational life expectancy of 10 to 15 years.

4. National Grid Limitations

- 4.1 There will inevitably be a higher demand for the consumption of electrical energy at peak times, e.g. winter evenings, when people are trying to warm their homes and charge their electric cars at the same time and during the summer months, when people use heat pumps in their alternative format, to cool public buildings and homes.
Will the current National Power Grid infrastructure be able to cope with the increased demand?
- 4.2 Has a robust, valid and wholly reliant infrastructure been positioned at the front end of this project, in preparation to meet those demands and requirements, that may not, as yet, have been envisaged?
- 4.3 What other sources of emergency heating will be available to use in the event of a mass power outages? For use by Resilience Groups, Emergency Services, Hospitals, Nursing Homes, older residents, etc.
- 4.4 Do we run the same risk for domestic electricity supply as we have seen with electric cars i.e. the current lack of a national infrastructure for car charging points? The car charging network promised by the government as part of their push to encourage drivers to buy electric vehicles has not materialised.