

Civil society statement – Energy Independence Plan & Spring Statement

We are writing as a coalition of 37 civil society groups to call on the Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the Business Secretary to ensure the upcoming energy independence plan protects vulnerable households, lowers bills, tackles the climate emergency, addresses air pollution, and gets the UK off gas. As [other European countries](#) rethink their approach to energy security in the face of conflict and geopolitical insecurity, it is time for the UK to do the same.

The plan must secure true energy independence through measures that help us permanently end our reliance on fossil fuels and power the UK with our own abundant, clean, cheap and popular renewable energy. Measures should be backed up with the necessary funding and fiscal support at the Spring Statement, and should include:

- **Immediate extra support for households:** Soaring gas prices could leave 1 in 3 UK households in fuel poverty.¹ At a minimum, the government must ensure that benefits are uprated as close as possible to April's inflation rate, rather than the planned 3.1%. Failure to do this will result in a second real-terms cut to benefits in six months. Reinstating the £20 universal credit uplift and injecting at least a further £7bn in the benefit system would also significantly lessen the impact of the crisis on the poorest households.² The government should also introduce further targeted support that covers the expected rise in energy bills for households on low incomes (including those not protected by the energy price cap). This could involve extra payments for households on Universal Credit, equivalent legacy benefits, and Pension Credit whenever the energy price cap rises significantly, or reinstating the £20 universal credit uplift. Payments could be delivered via a significantly improved and expanded Warm Homes Discount, or using the social security system. The government should also support public awareness-raising and impartial advice to help households keep their energy bills down.
- **Significantly scale up measures to reduce our use of gas:** The best solution to this gas crisis is to use less gas – through better energy efficiency and insulation, and by switching to electric heat pumps. Consistent, long term policy support and funding is needed. The government should immediately fulfil Conservative manifesto commitments to funding energy efficiency through existing schemes, including at least a further £1.4bn for the Home Upgrade Grant and at least £0.2bn for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Scheme. It should also provide at least £3.6bn for a new grant programme to insulate existing homes available to all households and significantly boost installation of heat pumps, supported through a market mechanism and at least an extra £4bn by 2025 to accelerate the transition away from gas heating. These longer-term measures can be supported through the £16bn green gilt and UK Infrastructure Bank, and initiating a new green term funding scheme from the Bank of England to enable cheap credit for retrofits.

1

<https://www.nea.org.uk/news/charities-warn-3000-energy-bill-could-leave-8-5-million-uk-households-in-fuel-poverty/>

² <https://neweconomics.org/2021/10/options-for-universal-credit-reform-beyond-the-20-uplift>

- **Shift energy supply to renewables and away from fossil fuels:** The government must expand renewable energy sources such as wind and solar, in harmony with nature, to end reliance on gas for electricity generation and increase energy supply to support decarbonisation of heat and transport. To achieve this, sufficient capacity must be allocated across the annual Contracts for Difference auctions, including at least tripling onshore wind and solar capacity by 2030. The government should also remove the onerous planning restrictions which hold back onshore wind. Support should be given to manage the transition away from the industries of the past, to create quality, net zero jobs which will support workers and communities into the future. Further expansion of North Sea drilling should be ruled out and the ban on fracking should remain in place - both of which are unpopular with the public, would worsen the climate crisis, seriously harm the UK's ability to lead climate action internationally, and fail to reduce energy bills.

Confirmed signatures

1. Greenpeace UK
2. E3G
3. Friends of the Earth
4. Save the Children
5. Green Alliance
6. Regen
7. MCS Charitable Foundation
8. Wildlife and Countryside Link
9. New Economics Foundation
10. Uplift
11. Energy Saving Trust
12. Climate Emergency UK
13. Age UK
14. Positive Money UK
15. Nesta
16. Clean Air Fund
17. End Fuel Poverty Coalition
18. Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
19. ACAN
20. Groundwork
21. Possible
22. A Rocha UK
23. Mums for Lungs
24. STEP (Solutions to Tackle Energy Poverty)
25. The Climate Coalition
26. Faith for the Climate
27. 38 Degrees
28. WWF UK

- 29. Platform
- 30. BOND
- 31. Environmental Justice Foundation
- 32. The Wildlife Trusts
- 33. CAFOD
- 34. Green New Deal UK
- 35. National Housing Federation
- 36. Asthma + Lung UK
- 37. Tax Justice UK