



# The Highland Council Fuel Poverty Strategy

2005-2008



## **FOREWORD**

This strategy demonstrates our commitment to working towards eradicating fuel poverty in the Highlands by 2016 across all households in all housing tenures.

Fuel Poverty is not a new issue for the Highlands. It is an issue that we have been aware of and have been dealing with in a number of ways for many years. What is new is the creation of a formal strategy that makes the links between the various activities of a range of Council Services and other agencies.

This is because fuel poverty is not just a housing issue. It is also about people and their wellbeing. It is essential that **all** the causes of fuel poverty are addressed. We can invest huge amounts of money on improving homes but if we neglect the “ people” issues – the issues of low income and poverty, ill health, social inclusion, unemployment and equalities – then we will not be successful in achieving our ultimate objective.

Our Fuel Poverty Strategy sets out the different actions that we and our partners will take to make sure that the causes of fuel poverty are removed – tackling issues such as making houses more energy efficient, raising people’s incomes and dealing with the cost of fuel. We are building on work that has already started on home energy conservation, reducing fuel costs through renewable technology and encouraging people to claim benefits to which they are entitled.

There is too much fuel poverty in the Highlands. Our hope is that this strategy will prove to be practical and realistic and achieve results that make a tangible difference to people’s lives.

**Councillor Margaret Davidson**  
**Chairman of Housing and Social Work Committee**

## INTRODUCTION

Eliminating fuel poverty is a national priority. A very clear statement has been made that fuel poverty is not acceptable – the Scottish Executive intends that by 2016 no-one in Scotland should be living in fuel poverty.

While those of us who live in the Highlands of Scotland occupy a unique position in the country living in an area of such natural beauty, we are also faced with major challenges in tackling fuel poverty. Some of these we share with other parts of Scotland – low incomes, an ageing population, rising fuel costs and hard to heat houses. In Highland though, these are made worse by other local factors – seasonal employment, higher costs of living, limited choice of fuel and harsh climatic conditions.

There are many households living in fuel poverty in the Highlands. Although the numbers fell during the last ten years, mainly due to increased incomes, fuel costs have recently been rising. This trend is expected to continue and because of this, there is an expectation that the number of households living in fuel poverty in Highland will rise in the short to medium term. It is very important then that we look for co-ordinated action to address all the factors that can cause a household to fall into fuel poverty. Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Scottish Fuel Poverty Statement (2002) local authorities have a statutory responsibility to produce local Fuel Poverty Strategies. This strategy which covers the period from April 2005 to March 2008, forms part of the Highland's Housing Strategy (2003 -2008) and builds on our Home Energy Conservation Strategy (1998-2008).

While housing issues are important, finding solutions to fuel poverty also cuts across the work of other services and agencies. These include the promotion of better health and well-being, environmental policy, economic regeneration, social and financial inclusion, equal opportunities policies and community planning.

This Highland Fuel Poverty Strategy sets out the direction that we, with our partners, will take to eradicate fuel poverty over the next three years as we work towards our 2016 target and it:

- ❖ aims to strengthen the role of the many different Council Services and partners in addressing all the causes of fuel poverty in a co-ordinated way;
- ❖ identifies the key issues that need to be addressed;
- ❖ shows what action we and our partners will take to eradicate fuel poverty;
- ❖ sets out the resources that we need to do this;
- ❖ highlights the wider context and shows how we will help to meet national and Highland priorities.

## **WHAT IS FUEL POVERTY**

### **Who are the fuel poor?**

Fuel poverty is where a household cannot heat their home to a comfortable level at a reasonable cost. The formal definition that we have adopted is the same as the one set out in the Scottish Executive's Fuel Poverty Statement: "a household is in fuel poverty if in order to maintain a satisfactory heating regime,\* it would be required to spend more than 10% of its income (including Housing Benefit or Income Support for Mortgage Interest) on all household fuel use."

Households don't necessarily spend this much – but they should in order to keep warm. This level of spending is disproportionately high and can force people to make difficult decisions between whether to keep their home warm or spend their money on other priorities like food or clothing. Some households spend more than 20% of their income on fuel costs and they are considered to be in extreme fuel poverty.

### **Which households are affected?**

Essentially these are households who are on low incomes and they include some of the most vulnerable groups of people: older people, lone parents, disabled people and those with a long term illness. They are all people who are often at home more than most households and use heat for more of the day.

### **What are the effects of fuel poverty?**

Tackling fuel poverty not only improves people's quality of life but it also prevents health problems. This in turn reduces the wider costs on health and social services. Inadequate heating can create health problems and make them worse. A cold home increases the likelihood of ill health and can aggravate illnesses such as influenza, heart disease, strokes and respiratory illnesses and is also linked to domestic accidents. Fuel poverty can also have wider social effects and increase social isolation. Older people may be fearful of going out because they will come in to a cold home and they can also be reluctant to invite friends and relatives into a cold environment. Families with children may congregate in one room that is heated and this makes it difficult for children to do homework or play or have friends round to visit.

### **Why are people fuel poor?**

Many different factors can cause fuel poverty – they relate mainly to poor energy efficiency, low incomes and high fuel costs. The obvious reason is that they are on a low income but it is not always as simple as that. Sometimes households are in fuel poverty if they have a house that has more rooms than they need and they are paying to heat rooms that are never or seldom used. Others live in houses that are not

energy efficient and which have all or some of the following problems: draughty doors and windows, old or inefficient heating and poor insulation. The way that the heating system is used can have a significant impact on comfort and costs as can the method of payment that is used for fuel bills. While the fuel suppliers develop more attractive deals for consumers who can pay by direct debit or standing order, those on low incomes who choose certain methods of payment are penalised. Prepayment meters allow small controllable cash payments making them popular with low income consumers but they are the most expensive payment method.

**\*World Health Organisation definition of satisfactory heating regime:**

For elderly and infirm households, this is 23 °C in the living room and 18 °C in other rooms to be achieved for 16 hours in 24. For other households this is 21°C in the living room and 18 °C in other rooms for a period of 9 hours in every 24 (or 16 over the weekend)

## **FUEL POVERTY IN THE HIGHLANDS**

### **Information about fuel poverty**

Information about the extent of fuel poverty is important because it helps us to understand the types of households who are suffering most, where the greatest problems are and what action is needed. This helps us to make sure that we are targeting our resources to tackle fuel poverty to those who are most in need and to the most effective solutions. Fuel poverty information also helps us to measure whether our actions are making a difference. However measuring fuel poverty is difficult and it is hard to know exactly how many households are in fuel poverty. Households can move in and out of fuel poverty as their circumstances change. It can happen if their income goes up and down, through periods of unemployment or illness or if they move into a house with a different type of heating or less or more insulation.

Measures of energy efficiency are useful indicators of the likelihood of fuel poverty. The National Home Energy Rating (NHER) is a measure used to assess energy efficiency inside a dwelling on a scale of 0 (poor) to 10 (excellent). The rating, which includes a locality factor, reflects the total fuel costs per square metre of the floor area required to achieve an adequate overall temperature.

This section sets out key figures and issues for households in the Highlands. More statistical information can be found in **Appendix 1**.

## Scottish House Condition Survey

The Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) 2002 is one of the best sources of data on fuel poverty. It found that around 21% of households in the Highlands (18,500) were experiencing fuel poverty. This is far higher than the Scottish average of 13% and out of all the local authority areas in Scotland, the Highlands had the 5<sup>th</sup> highest proportion of fuel poor households. 6,000 of these fuel poor households were experiencing extreme fuel poverty. This table sets out some of the key findings.

**Table 1 Key Scottish House Condition Survey (2002) findings**

	Highland Council % of households	Scottish Average	Highland Rating – from 32 Local Authorities
Households in fuel poverty	21%	13%	28th
Households in extreme fuel poverty	7%	3%	Not known
NHER* rating 0-2 ( i.e. very low)	16%	8%	28th
NHER rating 1-5			
Private sector	57%	37%	27th
Public sector	17%	12%	31st
Full central heating	76%	87%	28th
Partial central heating	20%	8%	30th
Perceived difficulty in heating homes	33%	31%	25th

Chart 1 highlights that the energy efficiency of housing in the Highlands is generally much worse than the Scottish average. Chart 2 highlights that households in the Highlands were found to be far more likely than the Scottish average to be in fuel poverty.

**Chart 1 – Percentage of housing attaining different National Home Energy Ratings (NHER) - housing in Highland in comparison with the Scottish average (SHCS 2002)**

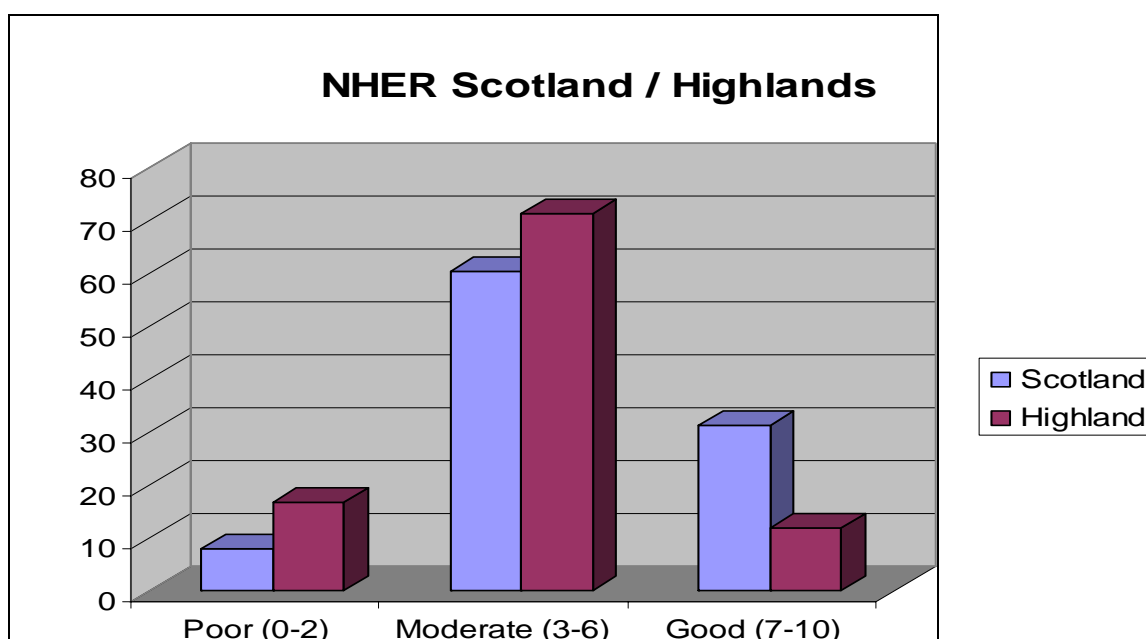
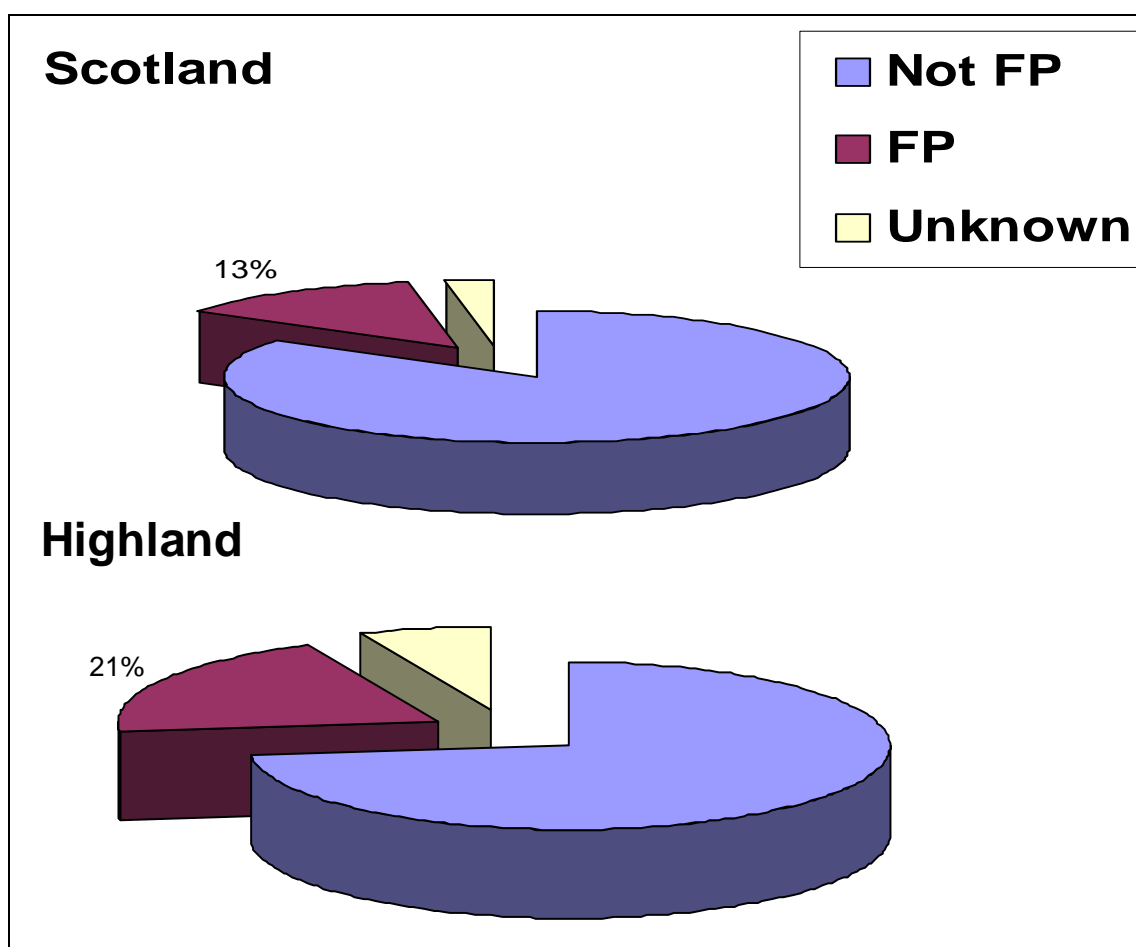


Chart 2 – Percentage of households in fuel poverty in Highland in comparison with the Scottish average (SHCS 2002)



The SHCS information is based on a sample survey of Highland households. Although it is useful as a baseline figure, it doesn't highlight that some people in some areas of the Highlands are much more likely to be experiencing fuel poverty than others. We do however know that:

- ❖ Fuel poverty is common across all housing tenures. Most fuel poor households own their own homes (11,000 owner/occupiers) although the risk of being in fuel poverty is highest for tenants who rent privately;
- ❖ Households living in rural areas are more likely to be in fuel poverty;
- ❖ Single person adult households, pensioner households, single parent families and households where someone is disabled or has a long term illness are more likely to experience and be vulnerable to fuel poverty. They often have both greater heating needs and low incomes;
- ❖ Whilst fuel poverty is common among households that don't receive benefits as well as those that do, households that get

one or more benefits are twice as likely to be fuel poor as those that don't get any benefit;

- ❖ Fuel poor households were found to be living in houses of all types and ages though those living in older houses or those with poor energy efficiency are at greater risk;
- ❖ 14,000 households in Highland (16%), double the Scottish average lived in very energy inefficient houses (NHER rating 0-2)

The findings indicate that our strategy needs to help large numbers of households come out of fuel poverty and that this task is bigger and more difficult than in other parts of Scotland. They also highlight that there are communities and particular types of household where fuel poverty is more likely to be a problem and that to make the biggest difference we should target our activities towards them. However we also need to know more about who fuel poverty affects so that we can do this.

### **Reasons for fuel poverty in Highland**

There are a number of technical and social/economic reasons why fuel poverty in Highland is far higher than the rest of Scotland:

- ❖ fuel choice is limited in many parts of the Highlands to those which are more expensive. Mains gas, which is generally the cheapest of the energy sources and produces the smallest amount of CO<sub>2</sub>, is only available in some parts of Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, Nairn and Caithness. Less than half of households are connected to a gas supply;
- ❖ The options for improving the thermal efficiency of many houses, particularly privately owned houses are limited because of their age and type. For example, there are large number of older houses with solid stone walls, timber frame houses and those of one and a half storey construction. All of these house types are difficult, disruptive and expensive to insulate. Grants to fund insulation work other than the standard loft and cavity wall are very limited;
- ❖ The harsh climate can have a damaging effect on the fabric and condition of the houses themselves in certain locations;
- ❖ It is largely a rural area and survey results tell us that people living in rural areas are more likely to experience fuel poverty;
- ❖ Many households live in the private rented sector and survey results tell us that private renters are more likely to experience fuel poverty;

- ❖ A large proportion of the Highland's population is elderly and they are more likely to experience fuel poverty;
- ❖ Incomes tend to be lower than the Scottish average and fluctuate more;
- ❖ Take up of benefits is low. This may be partly due to a strong local culture of self sufficiency but may also be due to difficulties in providing face to face help and advice in a widespread geographical area;

Other fuel poverty issues include:

- ❖ The rising cost of fuel of all types and oil in particular. Oil is one of the most common choices in the rural areas that are off the gas network. Large fluctuations in price can mean that a household's ability to pay for fuel can change;
- ❖ Lack of awareness by households of energy efficiency measures and the difference it can make to their fuel bills;
- ❖ Targeting of existing grant schemes such as the Warm Deal on households who receive certain benefits means that schemes are oriented towards benefit recipients rather than low income households. As it is known that take up of benefits in Highland is relatively low, the impact of this has been greater here;
- ❖ The complexity of grant funding. Although there is considerable grant funding available from the Scottish Executive and the fuel companies, it is not always easy for an individual to know which is the best deal for their particular circumstances or how to access them;
- ❖ The concentration of different grant funding programmes on almost identical measures like loft and cavity wall insulation. The programmes do not address improvements to properties that are more difficult and expensive to insulate like solid wall houses which are common throughout Highland.

We considered a range of possible solutions for dealing with these issues. This informed our proposed actions. Some issues can only be resolved by the actions of other organisations such as the Scottish Executive. We will continue to highlight the issues and possible solutions to them so that they can also help with resolving them.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

The Fuel Poverty Strategy was developed in the context of U.K. and Scottish legislation and funding initiatives that have been developed in the last ten years and these are listed at **Appendix 2**. In addition its development is taking place at a time when the Highland Council is increasingly committed to two important aspects of a fuel poverty strategy: partnership working and sustainable development and working practices. Some of these initiatives are described in **Appendix 3**.

The Strategy was prepared by a working group comprised of council officers and partner organisations. It was informed by consultation with a wide range of groups and agencies across the Highlands. This included a well attended seminar on tackling fuel poverty. More information about the consultation is set out in **Appendix 4**.

## RESOURCES FOR THE STRATEGY

There is no doubt that implementing the strategy will depend on financial and human resources being available. The Council will continue to make major improvements to its own houses with a capital programme of approximately £12m for the first two years of the strategy. At present investment is targeted under agreed priorities of Warm and Dry, Community Care and Area Initiatives which can assist in making improvements to the energy efficiency of the houses. The Council has entered the Community Ownership Programme and during these two years a decision will be made on whether the houses will be transferred to a new organisation which will have its own business and refurbishment plan. This will include making improvements to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for energy efficiency.

Repair and improvement of private houses is the responsibility of owners but the Council has a statutory duty to help low income households carry out certain repairs and improvements. It currently awards grants of approximately £2m a year through the Repair and Improvement Grants and Care and Repair Schemes. The investment priorities do not target fuel poverty directly but repairs and improvements may help to make energy efficiency improvements. The Housing (Scotland) Bill 2005 currently under consideration by the Scottish Parliament will drive a review of the current Grants scheme in 2006. It is likely that tackling fuel poverty will feature in any new scheme for providing assistance to help improve private properties.

The Council will continue to supplement the capital programme with funding from other sources e.g. Warm Deal, Energy Efficiency Commitment funding from the fuel suppliers and grants for renewable technology projects. These grants are also available to private owners and they are encouraged to apply for them wherever possible.

Much of the work set out in our action plan will be started within current staff resources of the Council and its partner agencies though this may change and require review. This will happen particularly as regeneration activities develop, heating schemes using renewable technologies are installed, a decision is taken about housing stock transfer and the demand for training and raising public awareness continues to grow.

## **MONITORING THE FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY**

It is very important that we continue to monitor all the actions identified in the action plan associated with the strategy to make sure that it is being implemented and that our actions are making a difference. Over the next three years, there are also likely to be new developments nationally and locally that will present further opportunities to tackle fuel poverty so we will continue to develop our strategy.

Our action plan sets out indicators which will help us to measure our progress. We will continue to develop mechanisms for monitoring the impact of our actions within communities. Future house condition survey findings will provide us with important information about the impact of our strategy in the Highlands.

A working group of partners led by the Director of Housing/ Head of Housing Strategy will monitor the action plan, agree further developments and carry out an annual review of progress. This will be reported to the Council, partners and the wider community through Council's publicity channels.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STRATEGY**

### **Aim**

Our overall aim is to eradicate fuel poverty in the Highlands as far as is reasonably practical by 2016 by helping households in all tenures to make energy savings, reduce their fuel costs and maximise their incomes.

### **Objectives**

To achieve this, we have set six objectives:

**Objective 1:** To understand the nature and extent of fuel poverty in Highland and use the information to prioritise actions to address its causes;

**Objective 2:** To improve the energy efficiency of houses in the public and private sector;

**Objective 3:** To provide impartial energy advice so that householders can make informed choices;

**Objective 4:** To raise awareness of fuel poverty and energy efficiency so that people and organisations take action to reduce fuel poverty;

**Objective 5:** To reduce the cost of fuel and minimise the effect of fuel costs on household income;

**Objective 6:** To maximise householder's income to help them stay out of fuel poverty;

There is a detailed action plan at **Appendix 5** which sets out what we are going to do under each of these objectives. The main aspects are set out in the following sections.

### **OBJECTIVE 1: Understanding the nature and extent of fuel poverty in Highland and using the information to prioritise actions to address its causes**

One of the major difficulties with tackling fuel poverty is identifying where fuel poor households are living so that agencies can target their activities to improve either their financial circumstances or the energy efficiency of their property.

We will use the information that we already hold to begin to prioritise actions to address fuel poverty. For example, using data from the census and methodology used in national research on fuel poverty indicators, we have drawn together a list of 50 urban and rural communities which data suggests are likely to contain significant concentrations of households who are vulnerable to fuel poverty. We will use this as one of our tools for targeting energy efficiency and income maximisation campaigns. These are however only indicators using limited information from the census, so we will also use local information about property condition, lack of insulation, heating systems, availability of fuels and benefit take up to target campaigns and initiatives.

To improve our understanding, we will build on other data gathering projects such as private and public sector stock surveys and the

proposed Scottish Executive registration scheme for private landlords. We will work towards building up a database of information on the energy efficiency of every property in the Highlands.

We will also develop mechanisms so that we can monitor change, the effectiveness of our resource targeting and the impact of our actions on the levels of fuel poverty on a regular and local basis

What we are going to do		When will we aim to achieve it
1.1	Identify the communities most likely to contain households in fuel poverty	April 2005
1.2	Target energy efficiency and income maximisation campaigns at 20 of the 50 communities identified as vulnerable to fuel poverty and 10 other locally identified communities	March 2008
1.3	Collect information on the energy efficiency of houses in the private sector through house condition surveys in Glenelg and Lybster and through a sample survey of all private stock in Highland	March 2006
1.4	Collect information on the energy efficiency of Council houses through the Community Ownership Programme stock survey	October 2005
1.5	Investigate the possibility of collecting information on the energy efficiency of houses in the private rented sector through the Scottish Executive's proposed registration scheme for private landlords	Proposed implementation date - March 2006
1.6	Establish a database that contains details of the energy efficiency rating of houses in the private and public sector	August 2005 for Council stock and March 2008 for full database
1.7	Establish the number of households in receipt of housing or council tax benefit in 2004-5	May 2005
1.8	Develop a framework for monitoring fuel bills before and after the installation of heating systems using renewable technology	October 2005
1.9	Prepare a framework for monitoring changes in energy efficiency and fuel poverty over all tenures	October 2005

## **OBJECTIVE 2: Improving the energy efficiency of houses in the private and public sector**

Tackling fuel poverty can be a complicated process and requires people to understand the issues, know what to do and often to make changes to their homes or behaviour. Often the people who are most at risk of fuel poverty are the hardest to reach. Whilst it is relatively simple to target investment to social rented housing with poor energy efficiency, improving privately owned and rented housing presents major challenges.

Unlike people's incomes which can fall or rise quickly, a building's energy efficiency is fixed. This means that if all buildings had a very high rating of energy efficiency then fuel poverty would be mostly eradicated. Unfortunately many Highland residents live in houses where it is not possible to improve the energy rating at a reasonable cost.

However we want to take this opportunity to set energy efficiency standards. For Council stock there is a requirement for all houses to meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for energy efficiency. Legislative changes present an opportunity for the Council to consider setting a standard that states that as far as is reasonably possible, any houses that are improved with assistance from public funds whether they are in the private or public sector should achieve an NHER rating of at least 5. This is the recommended minimum energy efficiency standard set in the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for public sector stock.

One of the best ways to guard against hardship is to "fuel poverty proof" a home with an efficient heating system and maximum levels of insulation.

The Council has been working towards this in its own stock since 1998 when it was agreed to target 70% of capital funding for housing improvements to "Warm and Dry" work. This has meant that priority has been given to installing full central heating, double glazed windows, new doors, loft and cavity wall insulation as well as carrying out roof repair and renewal and essential external repairs. There has been additional public funding available through the Home Energy Efficiency and Warm Deal Schemes and more recently through the Energy Efficiency Commitment funding scheme from fuel suppliers. The Council has taken advantage of this to extend their ability to bring loft insulation up to current standards and install cavity wall insulation. These are both relatively low cost measures that have a major impact in improving the energy efficiency of a house. Some properties with solid walls that are not suitable for cavity wall insulation have been externally insulated but this is a very expensive option and any grants available are only a token contribution towards the cost.

In significant numbers of privately owned and rented houses, there is still potential for increasing loft and cavity wall insulation. Unfortunately when people are thinking of making home improvements, insulation is not always their first priority. Some households on low incomes may also need help with funding improvements. There are grants available through the Warm Deal Scheme and from the fuel suppliers but they can be complicated and may not cover all the costs.

The Council has strategic responsibilities for helping private owners and renters to improve their houses. The Care and Repair scheme helps older and disabled people to carry out repairs and make improvements which can prevent fuel poverty. We will promote these opportunities to provide financial assistance and practical help and also look at other ways that we can give more assistance to people living in privately owned houses to help them make their homes more energy efficient.

There are opportunities to link energy efficiency improvements and income maximisation work to regeneration activity in communities. These include communities that have been identified as areas of multiple deprivation and those that are to be designated as Rural Service Priority Areas.

To tackle the challenges households in the Highlands face in living in difficult to heat/difficult to treat houses, we will use investment in the Council's stock to pilot schemes to cost and implement solutions that can be applied to other properties both in the public and private sector. We will also look to identify privately owned houses to pilot non traditional solutions. Together with local Housing Associations, we will also aim to identify either a new build or Council/private sector rehabilitation project involving houses with very high energy efficiency ratings so that we can compare on a lifetime costing basis, the additional capital costs set against fuel bill savings.

The actions in this section are directed towards making sure that maximum advantage is taken of all public and private sector funding to improve the energy efficiency of houses in the Highlands

What we are going to do		When will we aim to achieve it
2.1	Work with fuel suppliers/installers to assist owners and private renters in identified fuel poor communities to insulate their homes	2008
2.2	Identify ways to facilitate energy efficiency improvements in planning action and investment arising from stock condition surveys in Glenelg and Lybster and from the Highland wide sample survey.	March 2006
2.3	Investigate ways in which improving energy efficiency can become an integral part of the Highland Council private sector repair and improvements assistance scheme for owners and consider setting energy efficiency standards for houses improved through the scheme	March 2006
2.4	Identify pilot new build Housing Association or Council/private refurbishment project with high energy efficiency ratings	2008
2.5	Ensure that all Council houses have full central	Target dates to



	heating	form part of stock transfer business plan
2.6	Target the replacement of older and more inefficient heating systems in Council stock using the results of the Community Ownership Stock Condition Survey	
2.7	Ensure that all Council houses have loft insulation and cavity wall insulation where appropriate	
2.8	Through the Community Ownership Stock Survey, identify houses that are hard to heat/hard to insulate and carry out research and identify funding to bring them up to NHER 5.	May 2006

### **Objective 3: Providing impartial energy advice so that householders can make informed choices**

The Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (HEEAC) is the main source of free and impartial energy advice for all Highland residents. It is one of a network of advice centres throughout the U.K. and it is funded mainly by the Council and the Energy Saving Trust. In addition, successful bids have been made to other energy related organisations and the fuel suppliers for contributions in cash and kind for specific campaigns or promotions. The HEEAC provides advice at roadshows, lightbulb amnesties and other events as well as providing a helpline advisory service. Their lightbulb amnesties have proved a successful way of encouraging people to complete Home Energy Checks and seek advice. The map below shows where they have been held in the past two years.

Map 1 – Lightbulb Amnesty Events held in the Highlands



-  Light bulb amnesties which took place 2003/04
-  Light bulb amnesties which took place 2004/05

Some of the roadshows and lightbulb amnesties have been held in partnership with organisations that have been able to give money and benefits advice and assistance. Many homeowners use the Advice Centre’s services and it is an important way of helping to bring about improvements in private housing.

We will continue to support the Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre and their associated support staff who have enabled a number of new initiatives such as the Lochaber Energy Champions project.

Some Energy Advice Centres offer a home visiting advice service. Because of the large geographical area covered by the Advice Centre and limited staff, visits are made in some circumstances but it is not feasible to provide such a service on a large scale in the Highlands. This led to the establishment of the Lochaber Energy Champions pilot project which uses trained volunteers to provide impartial energy advice. It could provide a model for expanding our ability to provide energy advice throughout the Highlands.

What we are going to do		When will we aim to achieve it
3.1	Continue to support the Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre	Ongoing
3.2	Support retention of Local Energy Support Programme Co-ordinator post	Ongoing
3.3	Continue and evaluate Lochaber Energy Champions project. Explore options to extend the project to other Areas	2006

Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre

Contact them on Freephone 0800 512012 for free and independent advice and information. They can give advice on:

- Cutting your heating costs and fuel bills
- Dealing with dampness and condensation
- Making improvements to your home so that it is more energy efficient
- Different heating systems and how they work ( to help you understand which heating will meet your needs best)
- Grants that may be available to help meet the costs of improvements such as central heating and insulation
- Selecting fuel suppliers and switching to the best payment method for you
- Using renewable technology for heating and hot water system

**Objective 4: Raising awareness of fuel poverty and energy efficiency so that people and organisations take action to reduce fuel poverty**

Raising awareness - of fuel poverty, how organisations can help to take people out of fuel poverty and how people can help themselves – is a central feature of this strategy. It depends on the efforts of many different players. Alongside national media campaigns, it is important that we find as many methods as possible to inform people locally.

We are aiming towards having a wide range of ' first contact' staff having a basic awareness of fuel poverty so that they can refer people they visit or deal with to someone who could give them advice on their financial situation or home improvements. This will be achieved through energy efficiency/fuel poverty awareness training with staff of the Council and other agencies such as the health service.

The Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre will be targeting their events in communities that have been identified as being the most fuel poor. More of these will be held jointly with the Benefits Service. They will also continue with educational related events to extend the knowledge of young people about the environment, the need to conserve our resources and tackle fuel poverty.

We will use a wide range of media to get the energy efficiency message across including the use of public information screens and the development of the Council's website into an Energy Forum. This will allow the exchange of ideas and views on energy efficiency and fuel poverty and be an important means of gathering information about particular local issues.

What we are going to do		When will we aim to achieve it
4.1	Complete energy efficiency awareness training for existing staff in 37 Service Points and ensure new staff are trained	Ongoing
4.2	Run energy efficiency awareness training ( City and Guilds) for 8 Housing Grants Officers in Technical, Environmental and Community (TEC) Services	April 2006
4.3	Run energy efficiency awareness /fuel poverty training for Social Work Home Carers as part of home safety training	Ongoing
4.4	Incorporate energy efficiency awareness/fuel poverty training in health improvement training for key Community Health Partnership staff	2006
4.5	Provide energy efficiency advice at Benefits Service roadshows and Pensions Service surgeries	Ongoing
4.6	Pilot a scheme to provide a Home Energy Check with an application for Housing Benefit and to people who seek advice from the Money Advice service.	September 2005
4.7	Develop a referral system to ensure that householders get quick and easy access to relevant advice and information	September 2005
4.8	Run Energy Efficiency promotional events	Ongoing
4.9	Ensure that people attending promotional events or making telephone contact with the HEEAC complete a Home Energy Check	Ongoing
4.10	Organise energy awareness/fuel poverty event as part of annual Healthy Highland Week	June each year
4.11	Run energy efficiency /fuel poverty awareness campaign at Highland Council and Highland Health Board main offices targeting approximately 900 staff	November 2005
4.12	Maintain Energy Efficiency page on the Highland Council's website and develop as an Energy Forum	Ongoing
4.13	Arrange fuel poverty information for the public information TV screens in Inverness	November 2005
4.14	Continue to produce the newsletter Highland Energy Review for distribution to libraries, service points public offices and doctors surgeries and publication on the website	Twice yearly

4.15	Continue to insert energy efficiency advice in existing publications e.g. tenants calendar, repairs book and young tenants pack	Ongoing
4.16	Revise The Highland Council's Repair and Improvement Grants leaflet and website to include information about national grant schemes for insulation and heating.	August 2005
4.17	Work with Housing Associations in the Highlands to develop appropriate methods of increasing awareness of energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues within their organisations	Ongoing
4.18	Develop information in different formats e.g. for people with disabilities, in consultation with organisations who provide support	Ongoing
4.19	Run another school energy awareness competition	February 2006
4.20	Recommend that Communities Scotland develop research project to find out whether households make changes to properties, financial circumstances or lifestyles as a result of advice	March 2005

#### **Objective 5: Reducing the cost of fuel and minimising the effect of fuel costs on household income**

Limited access to the gas network is one of the main issues that the Highland Council has faced in trying to meet the targets set by the government in the Home Energy Conservation Act 1996 for a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. In the short term, we will continue to campaign for subsidies to extend the gas network as gas remains the cheapest fossil fuel available with the lowest emissions. As gas prices will probably increase in the longer term, it is important that work is started now to consider other fuel options particularly using renewable technologies. The capital costs of installing heating systems using renewables and the lack of technical awareness can act as barriers for homeowners. Consequently we will continue to focus on taking forward these projects in social rented housing. We have recently installed systems using air source heat pumps and individual wind turbines. Initial monitoring of fuel bills indicates that tenant's fuel costs have been reduced and we will continue to monitor and compare running costs compared with more traditional fuels.

Alongside these large projects with major capital and revenue funding implications, it is important not to forget that householders can take small measures themselves to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and save money. We will continue to provide energy saving lightbulbs and make sure that people know how to use their heating systems so that their homes can remain warm at the lowest cost to them.

If fuel costs fall, people need less of their income to heat their home. While the Council has little influence on actual fuel costs, we can

promote the most cost effective ways of paying for fuel. We will carry out a major campaign about methods of payment, tariffs and switching fuel suppliers. It is important that people are aware of the advantages and disadvantages of changing to a different supplier and that they are given assistance in what can seem to be a very complex transaction. We will also explore the benefits of developing partnerships with a preferred fuel supplier which could result in fuel savings to Council tenants.

Corporately the Council is developing a 10 year strategy for energy management in Council properties as part of the approach to sustainable development. Links will be made between the two strategies, enhancing corporate buy in to the Fuel Poverty Strategy and each will continue to be informed by the other.

What we are going to do		When will we aim to achieve it
5.1	Renewable technology pilot project – 16 Council houses fitted with heating systems using renewable technologies including wind turbines and air source heat pumps	2005-2007
5.2	Connect 500 Council houses in Pultneytown to the Wick District Heating scheme - wood fuel. HRA funding of £200,000 has been committed annually for 10 years.	Commencing 2005
5.3	Implement Milnafua District Heating Scheme (200 houses) - gas initially with potential of conversion to wood fuel.	Commencing 2006/7
5.4	Install solar panels in 11 sheltered houses in Ross and Cromarty	June 2005
5.5	Install solar heating to 20 houses in Nairn	2005-6
5.6	Install solar heating to 30 houses in Badenoch and Strathspey	2005-6
5.7	Install renewable energy heating systems in properties identified for replacement heating in Inverness – HRA funding of £100,000 has been identified.	2005-6
5.8	Complete feasibility study into fuel and system options for approximately 1300 properties in the Merkinch and South Kessock areas of Inverness	September 2005
5.9	Submit application for capital grant for initial phase of the Fort William District Heating Scheme using wood fuel	During 2005
5.10	Complete business plan for Kinlochleven District Heating scheme using wood fuel	During 2005
5.11	Monitor renewable options installed in 6 houses in Ormlie, Thurso – solar panels and positive ventilation	Ongoing
5.12	Complete District Heating scheme for 103 Albyn Housing Society houses in North Aviemore - woodfuel	Completed by 2006
5.13	Monitor renewable technology installed in 17 Albyn Housing Society houses in Kingussie - photovoltaics	Ongoing
5.14	Continue lightbulb amnesties	Ongoing

5.15	Provide energy saving lightbulbs to: New households in the private and public sector who get assistance from furniture projects Council houses when they are re-let; Council houses when heating is replaced if not already installed	Ongoing
5.16	Provide an advice leaflet for all new tenants on how to use the heating system	December 2005
5.17	Undertake campaign about switching fuel suppliers and payment methods and make information on comparable costs more accessible	October 2005
5.18	Integrate Fuel poverty Strategy into The Highland Council Energy Management Strategy	Ongoing
5.19	Investigate possibility of having a preferred fuel supplier for Council tenants	2005

### **Objective 6: Maximising householder's income to help them to stay out of fuel poverty**

Fuel poverty is a problem of poor finances as well as housing conditions. Making sure that people claim income benefits such as council tax benefit, housing benefit, free school meals, school clothing grants and discounts to leisure facilities can make an enormous difference to their lives. The Council leads a partnership group which aims to make sure that Highland's residents get the income they are entitled to and have access to financial services such as money and debt advice. A Benefit Uptake Action Plan for the Highlands is also in place. The group organises Benefit Uptake roadshows and other events and co-ordinates these with energy efficiency events. We will make sure that the links continue to be made between energy efficiency and benefits advice and assistance.

Bodies such as credit unions which encourage households to save and benefit from low interest loans can play an important role in helping people to move out of fuel poverty. They already exist in three areas of the Highlands and we will explore the feasibility of extending them to other areas.

Developing strong local economies which result in better employment and income opportunities, helping people to maximise their potential through education and tackling disadvantage and inequality are all vital aspects of tackling fuel poverty. These are all being taken forward through the Community Plan and other associated strategies.

What we are going to do		When will we aim to achieve it
6.1	Ensure Benefit Uptake Roadshows target communities where fuel poverty levels are high	Ongoing
6.2	Ensure that current Benefits information is available at Energy Efficiency Roadshows	Ongoing

6.3	Have advice and information available to signpost vulnerable households to cheaper payment methods or tariffs	October 2005
6.4	Develop Benefits Training Programme to be delivered to appropriate staff	Target date to be set
6.5	Provide regular updates of Benefits information to appropriate staff	Ongoing
6.6	Hold an annual Financial Inclusion Seminar to share good practice and update on information	Annually
6.7	Utilise volunteers and partners to provide energy and benefits advice	Target date to be set
6.8	Develop triggers for automatic Benefits checks for those eligible for Warm Deal and Central Heating Programme and those identified as being in fuel poverty	Target date to be set
6.9	Develop mechanism for automatic provision of information relating to energy efficiency for those in receipt of Housing/Council Tax Benefit	Target date to be set
6.10	Ensure that up to date Benefits information is available on the Highland Council website	Target date to be set
6.11	Review the information available to Gypsy/Travellers including advice on benefits and fuel poverty issues	Target date to be set
6.12	Explore the feasibility of extending the availability of community banking facilities, including Credit Unions, in the Highlands	Target date to be set

## Appendix 1

### Nature and Extent of Fuel Poverty in the Highlands

This appendix sets out more information on the nature and extent of fuel poverty. Most of the statistics are taken from the Scottish House Condition Survey 2002.

#### Fuel Poor Households

- ❖ Fuel poverty occurs across all tenures but most fuel poor people own their own homes. Of the 18,500 people in Highland who are in fuel poverty, 11,000 of these own their own homes;
- ❖ Of the 6000 people in extreme fuel poverty, 3,500 of these were home owners ( 8% of all home owners in Highland);
- ❖ 35% of pensioner households in Highland were in fuel poverty with 15% experiencing extreme fuel poverty;
- ❖ Single pensioner households were more likely to be in fuel poverty (42%) with 15% experiencing extreme fuel poverty;

It is not possible to give more Highland statistics about other household types experiencing fuel poverty as numbers surveyed were too low to give accurate estimates. However the following is known from the Scottish House Condition Survey findings for Scotland as a whole and from other research and it is reasonable to expect that the same patterns will be found in Highland.

- ❖ single person adult households, pensioner households and single parent families are more likely to experience and be vulnerable to fuel poverty as these households often have both greater heating needs and low incomes;
- ❖ Approximately one sixth of households in Scotland which have at least one person who is long term sick or disabled are fuel poor;
- ❖ Households with a member who has a mobility or other physical impairment or with a long term circulatory problem, people living in rural areas and those under- occupying houses are more likely to be experiencing fuel poverty.

#### Income and Benefits

There is a strong link between low incomes and fuel poverty as these findings show. While there are no specific statistics for Highland, there is no reason to doubt that the Scottish wide findings are different to the Highlands.

- ❖ Four out of five households with an average weekly income of less than £100 are fuel poor and approximately one in three households with a weekly income of £100-199 are fuel poor;

- ❖ Fuel poverty is common among those who don't receive benefits as well as those that do;
- ❖ Households that get one or more benefits are twice as likely to be fuel poor than those who don't get any benefits;
- ❖ Households who receive either Jobseekers Allowance or State Retirement Pension or Widows Pension are more likely to be fuel poor than other households.

## **Houses and Fuel Poverty**

Information on the energy efficiency of houses in Highland is also limited particularly in relation to those that are privately owned. Scottish House Condition Survey findings on the buildings that people live in showed that:

- ❖ Fuel poor households were found to be living in houses of all types and ages though those living in dwellings built before 1975 have a higher risk of being fuel poor;
- ❖ Most fuel poor households live in dwellings with a poor or moderate National Home Energy Rating (NHER) although households are more likely to be in fuel poverty if their homes have a poor NHER;
- ❖ The majority of fuel poor households have little or no loft insulation, and the risk of fuel poverty is greatest for those with single glazing;
- ❖ 16% of households in Highland (14,000) live in very energy inefficient houses. This is double the average Scottish figure;
- ❖ People in Highland living in houses that are owned or rented privately were far more likely than the Scottish average to live in houses with low energy ratings;
- ❖ Less households in Highland have full central heating than the Scottish average;
- ❖ All Council houses have central heating though approximately 10% still have partial systems;

### Strategic Context and Background

During the last ten years, the issues of energy efficiency and fuel poverty have continued to get an increasingly higher priority in national and local government. Both the UK Government and Scottish Executive have developed policies and legislation and provided funding to tackle these issues. The main developments are listed below:

**The Home Energy Conservation Act 1995 (HECA)** introduced targets for local authorities to achieve a 30% improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in a period of 10 years. The Highland Council prepared a HECA Strategy for the period 1998 – 2008 and has submitted three progress reports to the Scottish Executive covering the period 1998- 2003.

**The Warm Deal Scheme** was introduced in 1999 and offers free energy efficiency measures up to the value of £500 to specified low income households.

**The Central Heating Programme** was introduced in April 2001 and offers the free installation of central heating systems to elderly households in the private sector who have no central heating system or one that is broken down and beyond repair. This has recently been extended to enable people over 80 who have partial heating system to have full central heating systems installed in their homes.

**The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** requires local authorities to demonstrate a strategic approach to eradicating fuel poverty in their area within their local housing strategies.

**The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy published in November 2001** provides targets for tackling fuel poverty at a UK level with the first priority being to target older households, families with children and householders with a disability or long term illness.

**The Energy Efficiency Commitment (EEC)** launched in 2002 is the latest in a series of schemes in which the government requires electricity and gas suppliers to achieve targets for the improvement of domestic energy efficiency. They do this mainly by providing grants to householders to install insulation measures such as cavity wall and loft insulation.

**The Scottish Fuel Poverty Statement** was published by the Scottish Executive in August 2002. Its overall objective is to ensure as far as reasonably practicable, that people are not living in fuel poverty in Scotland by 2016.

**An Energy White Paper** published by the UK government in February 2003 underlined its commitment to the eradication of fuel poverty, improvement of energy efficiency and development of the EEC scheme.

**The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive.** This is a piece of European legislation that will be introduced in January 2006. It will affect awareness of energy use in buildings and is intended to lead to an increase in investment in energy efficiency measures within buildings. It will involve measuring the energy performance of all domestic and non domestic buildings using methodology that will be devised by the member states. It is proposed that when buildings are constructed, sold or rented out an energy performance certificate will be made available to the owner or by the owner to a prospective buyer or tenant.

### Links with other Highland Council Strategies and Initiatives

As well as this Fuel Poverty Strategy being an integral part of the Local Housing Strategy and the Home Energy Conservation Act Strategy, there are links with other Highland Council Plans, Strategies and Initiatives. Success in these will help achieve our aim of eradicating fuel poverty. Some of the main ones are listed below.

**Community Plan 2004 -2007.** This is the Highland Council's overarching plan for improving Highland's economy, the potential and health of the people who live here and their quality of life. The activities that are part of its agenda and the partnerships that help to take it forward will also help us to eliminate fuel poverty.

**Corporate Plan 2004-2007.** This addresses the challenges of delivering services across a wide sparsely populated area and emphasises that we need to work in partnership with other public agencies to make the best use of our resources. It also sets out the commitment of the Council to staff training and development. This partnership approach is recognised in the Fuel Poverty Strategy as we acknowledge that the different aspects of fuel poverty can only be addressed by agencies working together. We have also given a high priority to training front line staff to recognise where households may be in fuel poverty and help them to get assistance.

**Joint Health Improvement Plan 2004-2007.** This sets out a strategic framework for a co-ordinated long term approach to improving health in the Highlands. The Fuel Poverty Strategy is linked particularly to two of the priority areas of the Joint Health Improvement Plan: the health of older people and inequalities within communities of interest. There is a commitment to improving the quality of life for older people and this includes the ability to have a warm home and adequate income. There is evidence that certain groups in society are more likely to experience poorer health and these include people who live in poverty and financial exclusion. Improving the energy efficiency of homes and maximising income can therefore have a significant effect on health.

**Wellbeing Alliance.** This is a partnership between the Council and the following organisations: NHS Highland; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Northern Constabulary; Scottish Natural Heritage; Highlands and Islands Fire Brigade; Communities Scotland; Voluntary Action Highland. The Council recognises that it cannot improve the quality of life for people in the Highlands on its own. Acting together these organisations influence the prosperity, safety and wellbeing of the majority of people in the Highlands. The Community Plan, Joint Health Improvement Plan

and Regeneration Outcome Agreement have all been prepared jointly by the Wellbeing Alliance. The Fuel Poverty Strategy echoes the thinking behind the Wellbeing Alliance in that no one organisation can tackle fuel poverty on its own. Households can fall into fuel poverty for a number of reasons and a “joined up” approach is required to help them.

**Regeneration Outcome Agreement** . This is a draft document that sets out the strategic framework for using the allocation of Community Regeneration Funding which has been awarded to the Highland Wellbeing Alliance by the Scottish Executive. The CRF is to be used to regenerate the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods so that people living there can take advantage of job opportunities and improve their quality of life. Regeneration activities will be focused on nine areas that have been identified by the Scottish Executive through the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Representations have been made by the Council that the aspects of census information used to make up the Index are less likely to be sensitive to the circumstances of disadvantaged households living in rural areas. Some success has been achieved in that the Scottish Executive is in the process of designating some areas as Rural Service Priority Areas although at present no funding is attached to the designation. Actions to alleviate fuel poverty and improve financial circumstances are an integral part of any regeneration activities.

**Sustainable Development Select Committee.** It was established in 2001 to provide a focal point for the development of policies, strategies and action relating to sustainable development in the Highlands. It plays a key role in informing and reviewing progress with fuel poverty and Home Energy Conservation Act activities.

**Energy Management Working Group.** This is a group of councillors and officials who are developing an energy management strategy for all buildings that are owned by the Council. Its objectives particularly in relation to increased energy efficiency of buildings, use of renewable energy and reduced energy consumption through behavioural change and awareness raising are very much in line with the objectives of the Fuel Poverty Strategy.

**Renewable Energy Working Group.** This is a group of councillors, officials and representatives of agencies with an interest in renewable energy supported by specialist consultants who are preparing a Renewable Energy Strategy for the Highlands. The development of alternative and cheaper fuel is a major factor in alleviating fuel poverty in the Highlands together with underlying economic and employment opportunities.

**Financial Inclusion Working Group.** This cross service officers group was set up within the Council to look at the issues of financial inclusion to ensure that individuals can easily access their benefit entitlements and discounts quickly and easily and that procedures are streamlined across services and agencies. The group has expanded to include representatives from the Highland Advice and Information Network, Jobcentre Plus, Pensions Service and NHS Highland. Members of this group were involved in the development of the Fuel Poverty Strategy and will be closely involved in the actions that involve income maximisation that are set out in the Action Plan.

### **Homelessness Strategy 2003-2008**

There is recognition in the Homelessness Strategy that a great number of people who become homeless or who are at risk of homelessness experience other forms of crisis and often at the same time. Where problems do exist the solution is for help to be provided in a planned and comprehensive way and this echoes the theme of this Fuel Poverty strategy that it is important that joint working and good referral systems are established. This can help either to prevent homelessness occurring or help someone to settle in a new home. Taking action to ensure that homes can be heated properly at an affordable cost is an important part of any comprehensive package of assistance

## Appendix 4

### Fuel Poverty Consultation

During the development of the Fuel Poverty Strategy, a number of Council Services, organisations and groups were consulted and these are shown below. The draft strategy was also available on the Council's website and a number of comments were received from the public. A consultation seminar was also held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005 in the Averon Centre in Alness and it was attended by 60 people. They included Councillors and representatives from statutory and voluntary agencies, community groups, fuel suppliers and insulation installers. A summary of the feedback from this event is set out below. Views and feedback from all these sources have been taken into account in preparing this Fuel Poverty Strategy.

#### Range of Organisations Consulted

Housing Services	Chief Executive's Office	Social Work Services
Finance Services	Property and Architectural Services	Education , Culture and Sport Services
Technical, Environmental and Community Services	Planning and Development Services	Wellbeing Alliance Partners
Housing Associations operating in the Highlands	Community Councils	Tenants and Residents Groups
Fuel suppliers	Warm Deal installers	EAGA
Highland Advice and Information Network	Age Concern	Energy Action Scotland

#### Consultation Day 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005

The purpose of the seminar was to raise awareness of the causes of fuel poverty and what is being done nationally and locally to tackle it and to seek views on what we can do in the Highlands to help people stay out of fuel poverty. There were two themes for the day: improving the energy efficiency of housing and maximising income and reducing fuel costs

The main points made on **Improving the Energy Efficiency of Housing** were:

- ❖ Marketing the energy efficiency message should be a primary aim of the strategy. There should be specific campaigns for "hard to reach" groups like private landlords and tenants;

- ❖ Although there are a number of grants available to help people to make energy efficiency improvements, they all have different criteria and application methods. A streamlined fund with an easier application process would be much better;
- ❖ This is not just about improving insulation and making home improvements. More needs to be done to help households use their heating systems properly and find the fuel supplier who can provide the cheapest fuel for them;
- ❖ The Council should be setting energy efficiency standards for new build, refurbished properties and through grant mechanisms for houses in the private sector;
- ❖ Other funding should also be considered for energy efficiency improvements e.g. equity release and loans;
- ❖ The Council should use both regulation and persuasion to help private landlords to improve their properties;
- ❖ Encouraging the use of renewable technologies and district heating schemes is a major solution to fuel poverty in the Highlands. The Council and Housing Associations should be leading the way and taking a long term approach;
- ❖ This needs to be supported by other strategic improvements to infrastructure such as roads (e.g. for transporting wood fuel) and power lines;
- ❖ There is a need to get information about energy efficiency, heating systems, fuel prices and fuel choices out to more people including young people, older people and those with disabilities using different formats where appropriate. Housing staff and staff from other organisations and agencies particularly those who visit people in their homes should receive basic training in energy efficiency awareness;
- ❖ There should be more community based initiatives and targeting of energy efficiency campaigns

The main points made on **Maximising Income and Reducing Fuel Costs** were:

- ❖ In the same way as energy efficiency, income maximisation needs to be marketed and campaigns targeted at specific groups of people;

- ❖ The need to simplify grants and applications including application forms for claiming benefits;
- ❖ Training for staff working with the public is important so that they have a general awareness of benefits that are available and who can help them to access these benefits. Other staff should have particular training so that they can help people with forms and budgeting;
- ❖ The need to work with fuel suppliers to try and achieve a reduction in tariffs and particularly for pre-payment meters – a payment method favoured by households with low incomes and those with no bank account who cannot benefit from cheaper direct debit methods of payment;
- ❖ The issue of restricted tariffs should be addressed as households with particular types of heating cannot benefit from switching fuel suppliers to reduce their costs;
- ❖ Fuel companies should put more emphasis on preventing fuel debts by making more personal contact with customers to help them to understand how to read their meters and use heating systems economically.
- ❖ Credit Unions or other community banking facilities should be developed more widely in Highland both in communities and in organisations that employ large numbers of people;
- ❖ Agencies dealing with energy efficiency improvements and government benefits need to work closely together to make sure that people have information about all sources of financial assistance;
- ❖ The winter fuel payment from the government should be extended to disabled people and those on low incomes.

## FUEL POVERTY STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

## Appendix 5

**Objective 1: To understand the nature and extent of fuel poverty in Highland and use the information to prioritise action to address its causes**

<b>What are we going to do</b>	<b>When will aim to achieve it</b>	<b>What resources will we need ( lead officer or group shown first)</b>	<b>How will we know we have achieved it</b>	<b>How will we know we have met the objective</b>
1.1 Identify fuel poverty by ward and datazones using local data from the Census, Scottish House Condition Survey and from the national fuel poverty indicator exercise	April 2005	<b>Research Analyst Chief Executives Office</b> Housing Strategy Officer Housing Policy Officer	Fuel poverty mapped by ward and datazones to enable targeting	3 year plan for targeted campaigns in the most fuel poor areas in Highland
1.2 Target energy efficiency and income maximization campaigns at 20 of the 50 communities (datazones) that have the highest indicators of fuel poverty and 10 other locally identified communities	March 2008	<b>HEEAC</b> LESP Co-ordinator Housing Policy Officer Financial Inclusion Working Group	Campaigns in 30 communities	
1.3 Collect information on the energy efficiency of properties through house condition surveys in Glenelg and Lybster and a sample of all private sector stock in Highland	March 2006	<b>Housing Development Officers</b> Stock Condition Survey Consultant Public Sector Housing Grant	Survey reports	Information available to inform the Councils repairs and improvement assistance scheme for private owners
1.4 Collect information on the energy efficiency of Council stock as part of the Community Ownership Programme Stock Condition Survey	October 2005	<b>Community Ownership Programme Manager</b> Stock Condition Survey Consultant Scottish Executive Funding	Survey report	Information available to inform the business plan
1.5 Investigate possibility of collecting information on the energy efficiency of housing stock in the private rented sector through the registration scheme for private landlords	Implementation date not advised by Scottish Executive-likely to be March 2006	<b>Housing Development Officers</b> Technical Environmental and Community (TEC) Services Housing Policy Officer	Information from registration scheme	Information available to target advice /information and grants at private rented sector

1.6 Establish a database that contains details of energy efficiency ratings of houses in the private and public sector	August 2005 for Council stock (15000) and March 2008 for full database	<b>LESP Co-ordinator</b> HEEAC Housing Policy Officer Housing Development Officers Housing Associations	Database established	Information available to inform public and private sector housing strategies and to target campaigns
1.7 Establish the number of houses in receipt of housing benefit or council tax benefit in 2004-2005	May 2005	<b>Local Taxation and Benefits Manager</b> Housing Strategy Officer Benefit Matters Working Group	Report on number of households in receipt of benefits mapped by ward and datazone	Information available to target benefit take up campaigns
1.8 Develop a framework for monitoring fuel bills before and after the installation of heating systems using renewable technology	October 2005	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b> HEEAC Housing Policy Officer Area Housing Managers	Fuel bill monitoring framework developed	Information available to inform future heating schemes
1.9 Prepare a framework for monitoring changes in energy efficiency and fuel poverty over all tenures	October 2005	<b>Housing Strategy Officer</b> Housing Policy Officer Research Analyst Financial Inclusion Working Group HEEAC	Fuel Poverty Monitoring Framework	Information available to assess how many households have been taken out of fuel poverty by 2008

## Objective 2: To improve the energy efficiency of houses in the private and public sector

What are we going to do	When will aim to achieve it	What resources will we need lead officer or group shown first)	How will we know we have achieved it	How will we know we have met the objective
2.1 Work with fuel suppliers/installers to develop schemes to assist owners and private renters in identified fuel poor communities to insulate their homes.	2008	<b>Housing Policy Officer</b> Housing Development Officers HEEAC Fuel suppliers Warm Deal and Energy Efficiency Commitment funding	Scheme agreed with fuel suppliers for 2005-2008	All private sector homes that receive funding to improve energy efficiency achieve an NHER of at least 5 - equivalent to the SHQS for public sector stock as far as is reasonably possible
2.2 Identify ways to facilitate energy efficiency improvements in planning action and investment arising from stock condition surveys in Glenelg and Lybster and from a Highland wide sample survey	March 2006	<b>Housing Development Officer</b> Housing Grants Officers Private Sector Housing Grant Repair and Improvement Grants Warm Deal funding Energy Efficiency Commitment funding	Planned action and investment in private sector stock contains energy efficiency improvement measures	
2.3 Investigate ways in which improving energy efficiency can become an integral part of the repair and improvements assistance scheme for private sector houses and consider setting energy efficiency standards for houses improved through this scheme	March 2006	<b>Head of Housing Development</b> Housing Development Officers Housing Grants Officers Working Group	Repair and improvement assistance scheme includes provision for measures to improve energy efficiency	
2.4 Identify pilot new build Housing Association or Council/private refurbishment project with high energy efficiency	2008	<b>Head of Housing Development</b> Housing Development Officers Housing Associations Area Housing Managers	Pilot project identified	Life cycle costing on capital costs set against fuel costs for use in future projects
2.5 Ensure that all Council houses have full central heating	Target dates will form part of the stock transfer business plan	<b>Area Housing Managers</b> Property and Architectural Services Capital programme funding	All Council houses have full central heating	All Council houses meet the Scottish Housing Quality Standard for energy efficiency

		Warm Deal funding	
2.6 Target the replacement of older and more inefficient heating systems in Council houses using the results of the Community Ownership Stock Condition Survey	Target dates will form part of the stock transfer business plan	<b>Area Housing Managers</b> Property and Architectural Services Capital programme funding	Programme for replacing old and inefficient systems
2.7 Ensure that all Council houses have loft insulation and cavity wall insulation where appropriate	Target dates will form part of the stock transfer business plan	<b>Area Housing Managers</b> Property and Architectural Services Capital programme funding Energy Efficiency Commitment funding Warm Deal funding	All Council stock has loft and cavity wall insulation where appropriate
2.8 Through the Community Ownership stock condition survey, identify houses that are difficult or more expensive to heat and insulate. Carry out research and identify funding to bring them up to NHER 5.	May 2006	<b>Community Ownership Programme Manager</b> Stock Condition Survey Consultant LESP Co-ordinator HEEAC Property and Architectural Services	Programme for insulating “hard to insulate” houses as part of Community Ownership Business Plan

**Objective 3: To provide impartial energy advice so that householders can make informed choices**

<b>What are we going to do</b>	<b>When will aim to achieve it</b>	<b>What resources will we need</b> (lead officer or group shown first)	<b>How will we know we have achieved it</b>	<b>How will we know we have met the objective</b>
3.1 Continue to support the Highland Energy Efficiency Advice Centre	Ongoing	<b>HEEAC</b> Housing Policy Officer HRA funding Non HRA funding Energy Saving Trust Funding	HEEAC annual report	Number of people provided with advice Number of energy efficiency events attended Number of training sessions held
3.2 Support retention of Local Energy Support Programme posts	Ongoing	<b>LESP Co-ordinator</b> HEEAC Housing Policy Officer Energy Saving Trust	LESP annual report	Number of energy efficiency projects undertaken
3.3 Continue and evaluate Energy Champions project in Lochaber ( pilot project for volunteers providing energy advice). Explore options to extend project to other Areas	2006	<b>LESP Co-ordinator</b> 10 Energy Champions Voluntary Action Lochaber LESP funding VAL funding	Lochaber project evaluation in April 2005 and 2006	Continuation of Lochaber project Toolkit for Energy Champions produced for use in other Areas.

**Objective 4: To raise awareness of fuel poverty and energy efficiency so that people and organisations take action to reduce fuel poverty**

<b>What are we going to do</b>	<b>When will aim to achieve it</b>	<b>What resources will we need</b> lead officer or group shown first)	<b>How will we know we have achieved it</b>	<b>How will we know we have met the objective</b>
4.1 Complete energy efficiency awareness training for existing staff in Service Points and ensure that new staff are trained	Ongoing	<b>HEEAC</b> Service Point Manager and staff	Record of staff trained in 37 Service Points and evaluation report	Householders have made changes either in their properties, financial circumstances or lifestyle to enable them to heat their homes efficiently at a reasonable cost
4.2 Run energy efficiency awareness training ( City and Guilds) for 8 Housing Grants Officers in Technical , Environmental and Community (TEC) Services	April 2006	<b>HEEAC</b> LESP Officer Energy Action Scotland Housing Development Officers Housing Grants Officers	Record of staff trained. Energy Awareness training is formal part of training for Housing Grants Officers	
4.3 Run Energy Awareness/Fuel Poverty training for Social Work Home Carers as part of home safety training	Ongoing	<b>HEEAC</b> Social Work Head of Operations ( Community Care) Home Carers	Record of staff trained. Energy Awareness/Fuel Poverty training is formal part of risk assessment training for Home Care staff	
4.4 Incorporate energy efficiency awareness/fuel poverty training in health improvement training for key Community Health Partnership staff	2006	<b>Community Health Partnership</b> HEEAC	Commitment to include energy awareness/fuel poverty training in health improvement training for staff	
4.5 Provide energy efficiency awareness advice at Benefits Service roadshows and Pensions Service surgeries	Ongoing	<b>Local Taxation and Benefits Manager</b> <b>Department of Work and Pensions</b> <b>HEEAC</b> Health Improvement and Community Safety Officer Financial Inclusion Working group	Number of events attended	

4.6Pilot a scheme to provide a Home Energy Check with an application for Housing Benefit and to people who seek advice from the Money Advice Service	September 2005	<b>Local Taxation and Benefits Manager</b> <b>Money Advice Service Manager</b> HEEAC	Number of HEC's completed	
4.7Develop a referral system to ensure that householders get quick and easy access to relevant advice and information	September 2005	<b>Housing Policy Officer</b> Financial Inclusion Working Group HEEAC	Number of referrals	
4.8Energy Efficiency Promotional events	Ongoing	<b>HEEAC</b>	Number of promotional events and reasons for targeting events GIS map of events Record of other agencies participating	
4.9Ensure that people attending promotional events or make telephone contact with the HEEAC complete a Home Energy Check	Ongoing	<b>HEEAC</b>	Number of Home Energy Checks completed each year	
4.10Organise energy awareness/fuel poverty event as part of annual Healthy Highland Week	June each year	<b>Health Improvement and Community Safety Officer</b> HEEAC LESP Co-ordinator Housing Policy Officer	Event organised	
4.11Energy Efficiency Awareness campaign for Highland Council and NHS Highland main offices targeting approximately 900 staff	November 2005	<b>HEEAC</b> Highland Council Corporate Services NHS Highland	Number of staff targeted Number of Home Energy Checks completed	
4.12Maintain Energy Efficiency page on Highland Council website and develop as an Energy Forum.	Ongoing	<b>LESP Co-ordinator</b>	Report on issues raised through the Energy Forum and links to other websites	
4.13Arrange fuel poverty information for the public information TV screens in Inverness	November 2005	<b>HEEAC</b> Inverness City Partnership	Agreed regular slots for fuel poverty information	

4.14 Continue to produce Highland Energy Review for distribution to libraries, service points, public offices and doctors surgeries and publication on the website	Ongoing	<b>LESP Co-ordinator</b>	Two editions produced annually
4.15 Continue to insert energy efficiency advice in existing publications e.g. tenants calendar, repairs book and young tenants pack	Ongoing	<b>Housing Policy Officer</b> HEEAC	Number of Council publications with energy efficiency advice
4.16 Revise Repairs and Improvement Grants leaflet to include information about national grant schemes for insulation and heating available to owners	August 2005	<b>Housing Development Officer</b> Housing Grants Officers	Repair and Improvements Grants Leaflet
4.17 Work with Housing Associations to develop appropriate methods of increasing awareness of energy efficiency and fuel poverty issues for their organisations	Ongoing	<b>LESP Co-ordinator</b> HEEAC Financial Inclusion Working Group	Energy Efficiency/Fuel Poverty projects developed with Housing Associations
4.18 Develop energy efficiency/benefits information in different formats e.g. for people with disabilities in consultation with organisations who provide support	Ongoing	<b>Housing Policy Officer</b> HEEAC Financial Inclusion Working Group	Information produced
4.19 Run another energy awareness competition for schools	February 2006	<b>HEEAC</b> Education, Culture and Sport Service	Competition held
4.20 Recommend that Communities Scotland develop research project to find out whether households make changes to their properties, financial circumstances or lifestyles as a result of advice	March 2005	<b>Housing Strategy Officer</b> Housing Policy Officer	Research project agreed

**Objective 5: To reduce the cost of fuel and minimise the effect of fuel costs on household income**

<b>What are we going to do</b>	<b>When will aim to achieve it</b>	<b>What resources will we need</b> (lead officer or group shown first)	<b>How will we know we have achieved it</b>	<b>How will we know we have met the objective</b>
5.1 Renewable Technology Pilot project - 16 Council owned houses fitted with heating systems using various renewable technologies including wind turbines and air source heat pumps to test their effectiveness and potential for reducing fuel bills	2005- 2007	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b> Area Housing Managers Housing Capital funding Community Energy Programme funding Warm Deal Funding Energy Efficiency Commitment funding	16 houses fitted with heating systems using renewable technologies Fuel bill monitoring in place	Fuel bills reduced Annual energy savings for householders using energy saving lightbulbs
5.2 Connect 500 Council houses in Pultneytown to the Wick District Heating scheme (wood fuel)	Commencing 2005	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b> <b>Planning and Development Service</b> Area Manager Community Energy Programme funding Capital programme funding - £200,000 annually for 10 years	500 Council houses in Pultneytown connected to the Wick District Heating scheme	
5.3 Implement Milnafua District Heating Scheme (200 houses) - gas initially but with possibility of conversion to wood fuel	Commencing 2006-7	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b> Area Housing Manager Community Energy Programme funding Capital programme funding Warm Deal EEC funding	200 houses in Milnafua connected to the District Heating scheme	
5.4 Install solar panels in 11 sheltered houses in Ross and Cromarty	June 2005	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b>	11 houses with solar panels	

		Area Housing Manager HRA funding		
5.5 Install solar heating to 20 houses in Nairn	2005-6	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b> Area Housing Manager HRA funding	20 houses with solar heating	
5.6 Install solar heating to 30 houses in Badenoch and Strathspey	2005-6	Area Housing Manager HRA funding Grant funding	30 houses with solar heating	
5.7 Install renewable energy systems in properties identified for replacement heating in Inverness	2005-6	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b> Area Housing Manager £100,000 HRA funding	Number of houses with renewable energy heating systems	
5.8 Complete feasibility study into fuel and system options for 1300 properties in Merkinch and South Kessock areas of Inverness	September 2005	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b> Area Housing Manager Possible Community Energy Programme funding HRA funding Warm Deal EEC funding	Feasibility study completed and options selected	
5.9 Submit application for capital grant for initial phase of Fort William District Heating Scheme ( wood fuel)	During 2005	<b>Planning and Development Services</b> Property and Architectural Services Area Housing Manager Possible Community Energy Programme funding HRA funding Warm Deal EEC funding	Application submitted	
5.10 Complete business plan for Kinlochleven District Heating Scheme (wood fuel)	During 2005	<b>Planning and Development Services</b> Property and Architectural Service Area Housing Manager Possible Community Energy	Business plan completed	

		Programme funding HRA funding Warm Deal EEC funding		
5.11 Monitor renewable options installed in 6 houses in Ormlie, Thurso – solar panels and positive ventilation	Ongoing	<b>Ormlie Community Association</b> Area Manager Community Energy Programme funding Capital Programme funding	Report by Community Association on outcome of project	
5.12 Complete District Heating scheme for 103 houses in North Aviemore (woodfuel)	Completed by 2006	<b>Albyn Housing Society</b> Housing Association capital funding	Scheme completed	
5.13 Monitor photovoltaics installed in 17 houses in Kingussie	Ongoing	<b>Albyn Housing Society</b>	Review project	
5.14 Continue with lightbulb amnesties to encourage householders in the private and public sector to change to energy saving lightbulbs	Ongoing	<b>HEEAC</b> LESP Co-ordinator Fuel suppliers ( provide lightbulbs)	Number of households provided with energy saving lightbulbs	Annual energy savings for households using energy saving lightbulbs
5.15 Provide energy saving lightbulbs to: new households in the private and public sector who get assistance from furniture projects; Council houses when they are re-let; Council houses when heating is replaced if they are not already installed	Ongoing	<b>HEEAC</b> Inverness New Start Homeaid Caithness Lochaber Environmental Group Area Housing Managers Fuel suppliers Property and Architectural Services	All households who receive assistance from furniture recycling projects have energy saving lightbulbs  All new Council tenants have energy saving lightbulbs  All Council tenants who have heating replacements also get energy saving lightbulbs	

5.16 Provide an advice leaflet for all new tenants on how to use the heating system	December 2005	<b>Property and Architectural Services</b> HEEAC Housing Policy Officer Area Housing Managers	All new Council tenants have advice on how to use the heating system to best effect	
5.17 Undertake campaign about switching fuel suppliers / methods of payment	October 2005	<b>HEEAC</b> Financial Inclusion Working Group	Campaign undertaken	Householders have made changes to their fuel suppliers/methods of payment that have saved money.
5.18 Integrate fuel poverty strategy into the Highland Council Energy Management Strategy	Ongoing	<b>Energy Management Working Group</b>	Energy Management Strategy	Fuel costs for residential properties reduced
5.19 Investigate possibility of a preferred fuel supplier for Council tenants	2005	<b>Housing Policy Officer</b> Area Housing Managers Energy Management Working Group	Agreement with preferred supplier	Reduced fuel costs for tenants

## Objective 6: To maximise householder's income to help them to stay out of fuel poverty

What we are going to do	When will we aim to achieve it	What resources will we need (lead officer or group shown first)	How will we know we have achieved it	How will we know we have met the objective
6.1 Ensure Benefit Uptake Roadshows target communities where fuel poverty levels are high	Ongoing	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b> Finance Service TEC Services ( Money Advice) HEEAC	Numbers of roadshows Numbers attending roadshows Roadshow evaluation forms containing increases in benefit uptake	Increase in benefit uptake. Increase in income of target group Improvement in quality of life. Reduced inequalities in health.
6.2 Ensure that current Benefits and Pensions information is available at Energy Efficiency Roadshows.	Ongoing	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b> Finance Service Department of Work and Pensions	Information available at roadshows  Increases in benefit uptake	.
6.3 Have advice and information available to signpost vulnerable households to cheaper fuel payment methods and tariffs	October 2005	<b>HEEAC</b> Financial Inclusion Working Group	Advice and information available	Most vulnerable households get the best value from fuel suppliers  Numbers of people moving to a cheaper supplier
6.4 Develop Benefits Training Programme to be delivered to appropriate staff	Target date to be set	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b> Benefit Matters Group Highland Advice and Information Network Training budget required	Benefits training programme established and implemented Numbers of staff trained	Staff better equipped to provide appropriate advice and signpost to expert advice, leading to an increase in benefit take up, increases in income of target group and improvement in quality of life
6.5 Provide regular updates to appropriate staff on benefits information	Ongoing	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b> Benefit Matters Group	Quarterly updates circulated.	
6.6 Hold an annual Financial Inclusion Seminar to share good practice and update on information.	Ongoing annually	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b>	Annual event taking place. Numbers attending event.	

6.7 Utilise volunteers and partners to provide energy and benefits advice including Social Work, Finance, Housing, Health Visitors, Age Concern, Handy person Schemes, Healthy Living Centre staff.	Target date to be set	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b> HEEAC Funding to backfill for staff to enable participation in training	Increase in energy checks returned  Numbers of staff who carry benefit uptake leaflet and basic benefit check	Increase in benefit uptake  Increase in income of target group  Improvement in quality of life
6.8 Develop triggers for automatic benefit checks for those eligible for Warm Deal and Central Heating Programme and those identified as being in fuel poverty	Target date to be set	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b> HEEAC Finance Service TEC Services ( Money Advice)	Increased numbers of referrals and benefit take up	Reduced inequalities in health
6.9 Develop mechanism for automatic provision of information relating to energy efficiency for those in receipt of Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit	Target date to be set	<b>Finance Service</b> HEEAC	Numbers of leaflets distributed	
6.10 Ensure that up to date benefit information is available on the Highland Council website	Target date to be set	<b>Benefit Matters Group</b>	Up to date advice on website	
6.11 Review the information available to Gypsy/Travellers including advice on Benefits and fuel poverty issues	September 2005	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b> HEEAC	Advice and information available	
6.12 Explore the feasibility of extending community banking facilities including Credit Unions in the Highlands	Target date to be set	<b>Financial Inclusion Working Group</b> Credit Unions	Extension of community banking facilities	Banking facilities available to those on low income. Improvement in quality of life. Reduced inequalities in health.

