

Briefing Note: Wood Pellet Supply Issues – 6/3/2018

1. We became aware that tenants with Biomass heating were experiencing issues with wood pellet supply around two weeks ago.
2. At present the UK is experiencing particular issues with supply of bagged wood pellets. This is because the UK is currently a net importer of wood pellets and there is a Europe wide shortage of wood fibre (the raw material pellets are made from).
3. This appears to be a short term issue affecting smaller domestic (bagged) deliveries and supply was expected to return to normal by the end of February. However, shortages have continued into March, with supply issues compounded by inclement weather.
4. There are particular issues of supply in Croy, Badenoch & Strathspey and Lochaber, with limited issues in the Beauuly area. The issue was first raised in Croy, with all tenants were contacted in order to establish how many people had issues, providing advice and information to tenants on local supply.
5. Local teams in all areas have been proactively contacting tenants, specifically those we know to be vulnerable, to provide advice, assistance and guidance on where supplies may be available.
6. Where someone is unable to source wood pellets, this case is being treated as if they have no heating, with teams providing temporary heating and meeting additional electricity costs.
7. We have liaised with local suppliers and have been able, in some cases where, to direct supplies to areas we understand to be in most need.
8. We have arranged for emergency supplies to be delivered to areas in need. A supply has been delivered to Carrs Corner in Fort William, with supplies to be delivered to a depot in Inverness and Badenoch and Strathspey, imminently. This contingency will remain beyond the present shortage.
9. Local teams are devising practical arrangements for access / distribution / payment for supplies so that we can do thus direct to tenants in emergencies.
10. We are exploring options for providing tenants with additional storage space in order to develop resilience within their own pellet stocks. This being progressed through our maintenance teams.
11. We were already undertaking an exercise, through colleagues in Energy, to establish price and supply trends in wood pellets, and will link this to a wider review, including options for improving resilience through direct supply by the Council.
12. We are undertaking a survey of tenants who have a Biomass system installed in order better understand any issues that tenants have faced with systems.

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