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**11 February 2020**

Dear David,

Apologies for the delay in writing to welcome the Committee on Fuel Poverty's 2019 Interim Report and the steps it proposes to tackle fuel poverty. Citizens Advice would like to thank the Committee for its work to ensure the government's fuel poverty strategy is delivered.

We welcome the focus on the links between fuel poverty and the net zero challenge, and the coordinated work of the CFP and Committee on Climate Change in this area. Delivering on fuel poverty targets will be key to meeting the commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Energy efficiency support schemes for all households (including people in fuel poverty) will need to be coordinated. Aligning these two policy areas will lead to a fairer and more efficient outcome.

It will be crucial to decarbonise how we heat our homes in order to achieve the net zero emissions target. A strategy on heat is urgently needed to inform major decisions that will need to be made in the mid 2020s, and will also play a role in the delivery of the fuel poverty strategy. We have spoken to the team at BEIS that is leading on the Heat Roadmap, and our view is that the policy decisions about the future of energy efficiency should be integral to their work.

We agree that in the short- to medium-term, struggling households may need support to meet their basic heating needs that does not contribute towards climate goals. This includes, for example, households that are off the gas grid. These households will be best served if the government encourages the market to come up with innovative offers and solutions in this space. In cases where alternative options have been exhausted, oil boilers should be considered as a last resort.

We share the Committee's concerns about how the costs of low carbon transition are to be recovered. The Committee on Climate Change estimates the costs to the UK of meeting the net zero target as 1-2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2050. It is important that this cost is distributed fairly. We have commissioned research to identify the expected costs recovered, and their impact on consumers on a low income, and in other vulnerable situations, and on small businesses. We look forward to sharing the findings of this research with the Committee.

Improving the efficiency of homes in the private rented sector must be a priority for this government. Citizens Advice agrees with the Committee's view that enforcement is key to the success of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) regulations, and that the introduction of nationwide landlord licensing scheme is central to this. This should be supported by wider measures to rebalance the private rented sector including:

- requiring certification of properties against all national minimum standards before they can be let out
- all private landlords should be registered to a redress scheme with a single point of access.

More broadly, it is our view that the government should continue to make the MEES stricter. They must also tighten the cost cap for landlords, given currently around 50% of the landlords in sub-standard properties are not obligated to meet the minimum standard.

Citizens Advice agrees that there is currently insufficient funding on energy efficiency to deliver the fuel poverty target, and we support the CFP's recommendation for a new £1 billion Clean Growth challenge fund. The Winter Fuel Payment is poorly targeted at fuel poverty, and the vast majority of recipients will not be struggling with their energy costs. We think there should be a guarantee of support for a core group of low income households that contain someone vulnerable to the cold. This should include guaranteed help with paying for energy bills and to make energy efficiency improvements.

Lastly, we welcome the call to look at the most effective way to deliver local delivery solutions. As we have discussed over the years, the current delivery of the Energy Company Obligation scheme is not consumer-friendly. A more effective fuel poverty scheme needs to be designed with consumer behaviour in mind and be flexible enough to be adapted to individual circumstances. This is likely to require a move away from the supplier obligation approach, for example to delivery by energy networks or local authorities.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee to end fuel poverty and work towards a low carbon future that has consumers at its heart. More detail on our views in this area can be found in our response to the BEIS consultation on the Fuel Poverty Strategy for England.

We will soon be publishing our workplan for 2020/21, and as always, we welcome any further feedback from the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Dhara Vyas

**Patron HRH The Princess Royal**      **Chief Executive Dame Gillian Guy**

Citizens Advice is an operating name of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux

Charity registration number 279057    VAT number 726 0202 76 Company limited by guarantee    Registered number 1436945 England

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