

**WRITTEN QUESTION TO THE MINISTER FOR PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT
BY DEPUTY G.P. SOUTHERN OF ST. HELIER**

ANSWER TO BE TABLED ON TUESDAY 29th JANUARY 2008

Question

Recently published U.K. figures show a rise in households suffering from “fuel poverty” to 4.4 million; what are equivalent figures in Jersey? What measures, if any, will the Minister introduce to eliminate such poverty and in particular what consideration will he give to the introduction of social tariffs for poorer households or measures to improve the energy efficiency of housing?

Answer

My understanding is that the UK’s definition of a fuel poor household is one which needs to spend more than 10% of its household income to achieve a satisfactory heating regime (21 deg c in the living room and 18 deg C in other occupied rooms). The 2004/05 Household Expenditure Survey, carried out by the Statistics Unit, shows the percentage of Jersey households in fuel poverty (ie. Spending more than 10% of household income on fuel) was 3.5%. This represents less than 1,300 households.

Fuel poverty in households arises from a combination of factors:

- Low household income;
- Poor heating and thermal insulation standards in homes
- High fuel costs
- A split of responsibility for a property with landlord / tenant
- Under occupation of a property, something which is common amongst the elderly.

As Minister for Planning and Environment, I have very little influence over many of those factors but I do recognise the importance of good quality housing in terms of avoiding fuel poverty. I will shortly be publishing proposals to strengthen the building bye-laws in this regard that will set clear energy performance targets for all new dwellings, and which will require improved insulation standards of existing homes when they are materially altered or extended.

I would like to refer the Deputy to Chapter 5 of the Energy Policy Green Paper which discusses reducing energy use and the thermal performance of the built environment. Specifically, one proposal is to create a body modelled loosely on the Energy Savings Trust in the UK. The role of this local body (termed *Sustainable Energy Jersey*) would be to provide support and practical advice in matters of energy efficiency. In addition, the Green Paper proposes that this body would administer grant aid to low income groups to assist in improvement and insulation for their properties (see pg 106, Policy Option 5 - Energy Policy Green Paper ‘Fuel for Thought?’). It was initially proposed that £1.4 million for at least 5 years would be required but the consultation process has shown that this is probably too little. This grant support would be targeted at improving the thermal efficiency of buildings to ensure that overall energy demand (and thus expenditure) is reduced and that the energy used is done so effectively and to the full benefit of the resident.

Of course, these are still only policy options at the green paper stage. The Department is currently working on a set of firm proposals that will be brought to the States for debate in the form of a White Paper by the middle of 2008.

It is proposed that the cost of this grant aid would be raised through environmental taxes. A green paper on environmental taxes was consulted on in 2007 and firm proposals on the way forward will be taken to the Council of Ministers in spring 2008.

