



energy saving trust™

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Minister,

NORTHERN IRELAND EXECUTIVE DRAFT BUDGET 2008 * 2011

You will know that my organisation, the Energy Saving Trust, was established to counter the damaging effects of **climate** change and to focus on helping individuals reduce carbon emissions and energy use.

Improving the thermal efficiency of our housing stock is **one** of the most practical and best value ways of both **reducing** fuel poverty and energy use. Therefore, we have considerable concerns with the **NI Executive Draft Budget** proposals in relation to housing and fuel poverty. The NI Executive targets of eliminating **fuel** poverty in vulnerable households by 2010, and non-vulnerable households by 2016, will not be achieved if the predicted cuts to the Warm Homes scheme and **NIHE Heating Replacement Programme (HRP)** are implemented.

Recent research by the Energy Saving Trust (Green Barometer 3) shows that more than a dozen of **NI's** council areas topped the league of the 'biggest energy wasters' in the entire UK. Whilst much **of** this can be attributed to the fact **that oil** accounts for 70% of domestic heating in NI, we still have much to do.

On the positive side we have made **significant** progress with **our** Home **Energy** Conservation Act targets and this can largely be attributed to the introduction **of** natural gas (which has 30% less carbon than oil). In many respects it is the heating replacement improvements to **NIHE stock**, together **with** the **work** associated with the Warm **Homes scheme** **that** has acted as the magnet to bring gas to Greater Belfast. This 'magnetic' effect needs to be repeated outside the Greater Belfast area if we are to bring natural gas to the North West and rural NI.

Any **proposed cuts** to the HRP connection programme and Warm **Homes** scheme **will** dramatically **slow** down **the** roll **out** of the rural natural gas network. As well as leaving an ever increasing number of people living in cold, damp energy inefficient houses, it will greatly hinder **NI's** efforts to **play** its part in tackling climate change.

I would ask that in considering the **Draft Budget** further with Executive colleagues that you take our concerns into account. As ever, we **are** ready to assist you in whatever way we can and will, of course, respond formally to the consultation in due course.

Yours sincerely

NOEL WILLIAMS
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