



Marie Rimmer CBE, MP
Member of Parliament for St. Helens
South & Whiston
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 4847/01744 752075

National Energy Guarantee:

I know that there have been several calls recently for a national energy guarantee. In addition to new clause 36 to the Energy Bill, for example, I note that in October last year Energy For All also presented a petition on a universal basic energy allowance to Downing Street.

When asked a question on this issue in June, the Government said it had made no assessment of the potential merits of introducing a universal basic energy allowance. Instead, it said it would consult on a new approach to consumer protection from April 2024. As part of this process, in July it published a call for evidence on the retail energy market.

Unfortunately, this call for evidence in my view demonstrates a lack of serious interest from the Government in protecting households from a retail energy market that is not working for those most in need. Indeed, I know that fuel poverty campaigners have expressed serious concern that the Government failed to raise the option of a social tariff in its proposed reforms.

As constituents may know, new clause 36 did not go to a vote in the House of Commons and did not make it into the Energy Bill. Nevertheless, I can assure constituents that I will continue to monitor this issue and support efforts to press the Government on fuel poverty.

More widely, I agree that we need more action to help people with energy bills and the cost-of-living crisis. I believe, for example, that it is wrong, when many households are still worrying about high energy bills, for the Government to continue to leave on the table billions of pounds from oil and gas companies that could be used to provide greater support to households. Yet it has done just this by refusing to close the loopholes in the tax.

I also believe that we need rapid action to reduce energy demand by bringing housing up to standard. That is why I support a Warm Homes Plan that would insulate 19 million homes across the country over the next decade. In addition, I believe we need to accelerate the deployment of cheap, homegrown renewables to reduce bills in the longer term. I therefore support plans to deliver a fossil fuel-free electricity system by 2030, which would save UK households hundreds of pounds per household every year.

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Constituency Office:

Marie Rimmer CBE, MP, 2nd Floor, Century House, Hardshaw Street, St. Helens WA10 1QU, 01744 752075,
marie.rimmer.mp@parliament.uk
Website: www.marierimmer.co.uk