

Submission to Energy Green Paper
By Energy Action Limited on behalf of
Ballyfermot Residential Energy & Fuel Poverty Project Group

30 November 2006

Background

In the Ballyfermot area, government and non-government organisations have been active over many years in addressing difficult situations faced by those households on low income and living in energy inefficient housing conditions.

In March 2003, Dublin 10 and 20 Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS) invited Energy Action and many of these organisations to work in a co-ordinated way to address the issue of fuel poverty in Ballyfermot. A Project Group was then established with representatives from all the main agencies broadly associated with tackling fuel poverty or dealing with those in fuel poverty. The participating organisations in the project also included Energy Action, Dublin City Council, Ballyfermot Partnership, Sustainable Energy Ireland, St. Vincent de Paul Society, Health Service Executive South West Area, the Department of Social and Family Affairs, ESB and Bord Gais.

The Ballyfermot Residential Energy and Fuel Poverty report, written by Energy Action Limited and Alembic Research, based on energy audit assessments on a representative sample of 6,013 dwellings in Ballyfermot, was launched by The Minister for Marine, Communications and Natural Resources, Mr. Noel Dempsey TD, in the Ballyfermot Civic Centre on 11th October 2006.

The study looked at the impact of four separate improvement measures, namely;

- § a basic insulation package including a minimum of 200mmm of attic insulation and cavity wall insulation
- § a high efficiency central heating system
- § external insulation for solid wall houses
- § high specification double glazing units.

If just the basic insulation package and the central heating upgrade were carried out for all houses, the report shows that the average weekly energy bill per dwelling would reduce to €16.80 (April 2004 energy prices) and the annual CO₂ emissions per dwelling would almost be halved to 4.8 tonnes. This would reduce the community's combined yearly energy bill from €7.44m to €5.27m and produce a saving of 20,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.

The report recommends that all houses in Ballyfermot receive both the insulation package and the central heating upgrade so that Ballyfermot would serve as a model for improving the energy efficiency of the dwellings of all communities. A targeted energy advice programme with residents groups, schools and local agencies is also recommended so that everyone develops good energy efficiency habits.

The key point arising from the report is that existing programmes have limited coverage so that only a limited number of households, including some in fuel poverty, have access to insulation programmes such as the Warmer Homes Scheme and the Local Authority Central Heating programme.

Submission Proposal

Based on the outcome and findings of the Ballyfermot Residential and Fuel Poverty Report, the followings measures are proposed:

- § That an initiative be undertaken whereby Ballyfermot is designated as an energy efficient urban housing area with the aim of eliminating fuel poverty and ensuring all other housing stock has a standard insulation package and energy efficient heating systems as a minimum
- § That funding be provided to implement energy efficient measures for households not covered by existing programmes. For example,
 - that all households not eligible for the Warmer Homes Scheme are either given access to the scheme or provided with a grant to cover the cost of installing a basic insulation package. This would include the provision of cavity wall insulation where required.
 - That all households requiring installation of a central heating system or an upgrade of their current system will be grant aided for same. This would also include full funding to install renewable systems such as wood pellet boilers for those in fuel poverty.
 - That all households without double glazing be provided with funding to install same as required.
 - That a pilot project be undertaken to retrofit solar water heaters to low income households

In Ballyfermot, 40% of the 6,459 households were in receipt of fuel benefit in 2003. In addition, 6,137 persons were in receipt of payment from the Department of Social and Family Affairs thus indicating the levels of hardship being experienced. The funding of complete measures that will comprehensively address fuel poverty should be a priority within this initiative.

By adopting this range of measures for all households in Ballyfermot, in addition to measures available from current programmes, it should be possible to demonstrate the contribution that urban housing areas in Ireland can make to reducing Ireland's CO₂ emissions and lowering energy costs for householders.