

14th December 2011

Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers (IGEM) State of the Nation Report on fuel poverty – ‘Out in the Cold’

As winter takes hold and temperatures start to fall, the Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers (IGEM) is calling on UK Government to amend its Winter Fuel Payment regime - increasing the level of financial support offered to those living in the coldest regions of the Country.

Winter Fuel Payments are yearly, one-off payments to help older people keep warm during winter. Under the current system, Winter Fuel Payments offer the same level of financial assistance to everyone irrespective of where they live in the UK.

Dr Claire Curtis-Thomas, Chartered Engineer and Chief Executive of IGEM explains that *"currently the existing scheme pays out the same amount of money to everyone irrespective of where they live. This one fits all approach completely ignores the fact that people in the North need to put their heating on for longer than their counterparts in the sunnier and warmer South."*

Statistics reveal that Scotland regularly experiences the highest proportion of hyperthermia related deaths in the UK. IGEM believes that action must be taken to address the inequality of the Winter Fuel Payments scheme which fails to reduce this grim statistic.

"By incorporating climate statistics into the Winter Fuel Payments scheme those at highest risk of temperature related illness like hyperthermia, would receive a higher level of financial support, the current payment scheme has fatal consequences."

"With a capped budget to support vulnerable individuals through winter, it is imperative that Winter Fuel Payments are directed at those in most need. This can be achieved by reducing the level of subsidy paid to those in the South and redirecting this money to those in the North."

The Institution's call for climate based Winter Fuel Payments is just one of several recommendations that it believes will safeguard the most vulnerable members of society from harsh winters. Details of all of the Institution's recommendations are contained within IGEM's State of the Nation Report on fuel poverty in the UK.

The report entitled 'Out in the Cold' will be presented in the Jubilee Room off Westminster Hall in the Palace of Westminster on Wednesday 14th December, by IGEM Chief Executive, Dr Claire Curtis-Thomas in conjunction with Barry Sheerman MP for Huddersfield, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Gas Safety Group and Secretary of the Associate Parliamentary Sustainable Resource Group, to an audience of key industry stakeholders, Members of Parliament and Government representatives including Barry Gardiner MP for Brent North, Member of the Energy and Climate Change Select Committee.

Ends

Notes to editors:

State of the Nation Report on Fuel Poverty

The Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers (IGEM) State of the Nation Report on fuel poverty – 'Out in the Cold' is launched on Wednesday 14th December 2011 in the Jubilee Room off West Minster Hall in the Palace of Westminster between 1pm and 3pm.

Speeches commence at 1.30pm and will be delivered by; IGEM Chief Executive Dr Claire Curtis-Thomas CEng CIGEM FIMechE FIET FCGI FRSA (former Member of Parliament 1997 – 2010) and Barry Sheerman MP for Huddersfield, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Gas Safety Group and Secretary of the Associate Parliamentary Sustainable Resource Group.

Institution of Gas Engineers & Managers (IGEM)

IGEM is a learned Institution and Chartered professional body established in 1863 and licensed by the Engineering Council. The Institution provides, through its independent technical panels, definitive process standards which are used throughout the gas sector globally.

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