

Fooling Around With `Fuel Poverty`

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[By Godfrey Bloom MEP](#)

As anybody who has seen the satire, Yes, Minister will know, when politicians want to hide the fact that their government is not performing well, they simply change the method by which its performance is measured. And they get an 'independent' expert to justify changing it. In just this way, the Department for Energy and Climate Change commissioned a report, which, surprise surprise, has now concluded that the measure of 'fuel poverty' should be changed.

You can read the Hills Report on Fuel Poverty [here](#).

This has come about because the government is embarrassed by the fact that the number of households living in fuel poverty has risen from 1.2 million to 4 million between 2004 and 2009. It is now likely much higher. They have been warned by many authorities on the subject that excessive climate and energy policies will have the effect of forcing businesses to close, unemployment to rise, and people to suffer, and in some cases die, as they cannot afford their energy bills. But they ignored the advice.

There is no point fiddling the statistics. Rising energy costs have been caused by policy. We know this because in countries where there isn't such an emphasis on climate change and renewable energy legislation, such as the USA, there has been no rise in domestic prices. The debate about what the 'real' measure of 'fuel poverty' ought to be could go on forever. But common sense alone tells us that when energy costs rise, more people suffer. This attempt to make the problem look smaller, and shift responsibility away from the government is grotesque. If the government abandoned its climate targets, stopped offering huge subsidies to renewable energy generators, and allowed suppliers to compete freely, prices would fall, and 'fuel poverty' would not be an issue.

[A BBC article](#) gives the government's agenda away: lots of calls for yet more intervention, and claims that the problem can be solved by subsidised insulation programmes.

The government's own Fuel Poverty Advisory Group (FPAG) has called on it to use projected revenues from a minimum price on carbon and carbon trading to tackle fuel poverty.

The government said it is already tackling the problem through a range of other measures, including the Warm Homes Discount, which offers help with bills to low-income households.

"The number of fuel-poor households helped by government-backed schemes is likely to more than halve over the next three years, despite fuel poverty levels having almost tripled in five years," said Derek Lickorish, chairman of the FPAG.

This can only make the problem worse. Expect higher bills. Expect more fuel poverty.

[Godfrey Bloom's blog](#)