

Developing a mixed methods approach to support the dual ambition of delivering the low carbon heat transition and eradication of fuel poverty in Scotland.

Application deadline: 14 January 2024

Start date: 1 March 2024

This is a unique opportunity, co-funded by [Energy Action Scotland](#), the Scottish [Energy Technology Partnership](#) and the University of Strathclyde's [Centre for Energy Policy \(CEP\)](#) for a PhD candidate to engage in very policy relevant and novel study. The PhD will be co-supervised by the CEP Director, [Professor Karen Turner](#), and [Dr Kirsten Jenkins](#), an expert on the energy transition and social justice at the University of Edinburgh. The successful candidate will register under the new Policy Analysis PhD stream in the Department of Government and Public Policy at the University of Strathclyde by 28th February 2024, enabling them to work closely with CEP's work leading the [Equity Theme](#) of the new UKRI funded [Energy Demand Research Centre](#).

The PhD candidate will join a growing team of researchers, academics and knowledge exchange professionals at the University of Strathclyde's Centre for Energy Policy (CEP). CEP was part of the School of Government and Public Policy's submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), which Times Higher Education has ranked as #1 across the UK in the Politics and International Studies Unit of Assessment. Virtually all of the School's research outputs were rated as 'world-leading' or 'internationally excellent' and 100% of the impact of this research, which included a CEP impact case study, was rated as outstanding (4*). At CEP, the student will have access to a team of researchers working across the Net Zero space and would benefit from interaction with them, as well as access to personal development training fund which is provided centrally from the University. These funds could support, for example, attendance at conferences and participation in relevant training.

Successful candidates will undertake a PhD project that will contribute to expanding the evidence base and providing policy and decision makers with the necessary evidence to effectively address the challenge of transitioning to a prosperous, sustainable, and more equitable net zero economy in the UK. There are four topic areas that we would like candidates to focus proposals around. These are listed below.

Context and Aim: The Scottish Government has committed to reducing emissions from heat in buildings by 68% (from 2020 levels) by 2030 and that by 2040 no more than 5% of households will be 'fuel poor'. Realising these ambitions will require policies informed by a strengthened understanding of the economic and societal implications of different heat decarbonisation actions on the most vulnerable households and what policy and regulatory interventions are required to ensure a fair transition. This PhD project seeks to build timely and this critical understanding contributing to ensuring Scotland's Net Zero transition delivers access to sustainable and affordable energy for all households.



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Description: This timely PhD project will develop insights on economically, politically, and socially feasible pathways to delivering the Scottish Government's heat decarbonisation and fuel poverty eradication goals. Meeting these goals requires policies informed by improved understanding of how specific actions – including on pricing, fiscal interventions and/or energy supplier activity on heat networks and energy efficiency - may lower energy bills for fuel poor customers. This innovative and collaborative endeavour involving the University of Strathclyde and Energy Action Scotland will strengthen understanding to inform government, industry and regulatory decision-making, including by drawing on the lived experiences of people experiencing fuel poverty.

The PhD project will be guided by three fundamental objectives, which could inform three work packages:

1. Understanding the current energy policy landscape in relation to heat decarbonisation and fuel poverty in Scotland in particular, and relative to the UK picture (including reserved competencies). This should involve comparison across other nations to gain a global perspective that is clearly applicable within the devolved and reserved energy landscape of the UK
2. Using applied analyses, including potential wider economy scenario analyses, and/or case study based on cross-country learnings, to explore a range of current policy and regulatory interventions and their impact on heat decarbonisation and fuel poverty.
3. Contributing to framing, identifying and building consensus around evidence-based political economy and social policy narratives around new economically, politically and socially feasible pathways to a low carbon heat transition characterised by greater equity and substantial reductions in fuel poverty.