

## CAN Executive Meeting Minutes

9 October 2014 @ 10:30 am  
London Borough of Camden Town Hall

### Present:

Darsh Chauhan	(DCh)	CAN National Secretariat & Vice Chair, East Midlands CAN
Irene Fernow	(IF)	Chair, London HECA Forum
Paul Hinsley	(PH)	Chair, HECA East
John Kolm-Murray	(JKM)	National CAN Deputy Chair
Rob Leeson	(RL)	CAN National Secretariat
Karen Lond	(KL)	Chair, East Midlands CAN
Paul Maplethorpe (Chair)	(PM)	CAN National Chair & Chair, East Pennine CAN
Carol White	(CW)	Chair, South East CAN

### Apologies:

David Colbourne - Chair, North West CAN  
Jane Mears - Vice Chair, East Pennine CAN  
Oliver Myers - CAN Representative & Policy Advisor  
Neil Short - Chair, South West CAN  
Stuart Pye - Vice Chair, North West CAN

### Welcome and Introductions

PM welcomed the group and introductions were made.

#### 1. Minutes of 10 April 2014 & Matters Arising

- 1.1 Minutes of the previous Executive meeting and AGM, held on 10 April 2014, were approved. There were no matters arising.
- 1.2 Note that the meeting originally scheduled for 10 July was cancelled as it coincided with a strike day.

#### 2. Sponsorship update

- 2.1 DC and RL had their final meeting of the sponsorship contract with E.ON on 1 October. They were very happy with the way the sponsorship had gone but, as reported previously, they are unable to renew this, mainly due to the recent uncertainties over ECO. They have said that they might be able to sponsor an individual conference event next year.
- 2.2 One of the questions raised at the meeting was why smaller energy suppliers are not obligated under ECO. E.ON also pointed out that some customers are losing warm homes discount when switching to small suppliers. E.ON think Ofgem should oblige small companies to point this out when switching customers.

#### 3. Secretariat update

- 3.1 The Conference in Bristol on 4 July went well, as did the recent Conference in Coventry on 7 October 2014. There will be a full report on both conferences in the next issue of the CAN Magazine.
- 3.2 The summer CAN magazine was published in June and the E-bulletin has been published as usual.

#### Sponsorship and Conferences

- 3.3 We need to think about how we move the network forward. It might be difficult to secure sponsorship for 1 or 2 years with current uncertainties, e.g. the election coming up.

Do we have a two-day conference or continue with one-day events? It might be worth having a two-day conference later in the year, bearing in mind that Government will be in purdah from March. Should we look for individual sponsorship for conferences?

- 3.4 If Labour or Conservatives are elected without a coalition, things could change radically, so it could be pointless holding a conference before the election. It was decided that we should plan a two-day conference later in the year and look for sponsorship earlier on with a larger exhibition area. Sponsorship for a 2-day event might be easier to find.
- 3.5 CAN should tell all three major parties, before the election, what we want. We could circulate a document saying who we are, what we are and what we expect along with data on CO<sub>2</sub>, green agenda and FP, relating to what we have done. A lot of organisations do this.
- 3.6 We are due to have a survey of members next year around summer. We could perhaps bring this forward and ask for responses by December on questions around this and look at results in early January / February. We could then send this to political parties before purdah, saying what we want from government. A lot of members have just worked on FP strategies so they will have already been thinking about these sorts of issues.
- 3.7 If we are to plan a two-day conference later in year, we need to look at dates and potential clashes. A central venue would be good. Two-day conferences take more planning than a one-day event so we would have to start planning early.
- 3.8 People have missed the opportunity to network with people from all over the country that a two-day event provides.
- 3.9 We need a public transport friendly venue.
- 3.10 We should avoid the three weeks in September over which the NEA conference is due to take place.
- 3.11 It was noted that a two-day conference won't happen without sponsorship, so we need to look for sponsors early on.
- 3.12 If possible, it might be worth having a chairs' away day at the end of January to give enough time to draft and submit our document to parties, and go over venue details that we've found. It was noted, though, that it might be difficult for some of the Executive to justify attending the January Executive meeting as well as a Chairs Away Day in the same month.

#### **Finances:**

- 3.13 The CAN National Secretariat has been quite careful with spending and have done a lot of debt chasing, which can make us unpopular.
- 3.14 We have a good reserve in the savings account, which should allow us to continue to run the basic secretariat services for a maximum of 12 months without sponsorship, although it would be better to find a sponsor as soon as possible so we don't have to rebuild our reserves again.
- 3.15 There are now only 9 or 10 LAs in the North East CAN region, so the forum has ceased. The NE Secretariat has given the remainder of its funds, about £900, to the National Secretariat. They can't see anything happening in the region so they have left it up to us to decide what we should do with it.
- 3.16 We could do something to get NE members back in contact and reach out to new officers in post after the general election and strategies have settled down. We could ring fence the money until then.
- 3.17 It was also suggested that the money could be used to support magazine printing costs, which might have to be produced in electronic form only, otherwise.
- 3.18 There are two officers from the North East due to attend the EP CAN forum, although no one from the North East has applied to attend NW CAN meetings.
- 3.19 RL is still sending important updates to the NE CAN contact list.

#### **Conference invoicing policy:**

- 3.20 Please refer to the notes on outstanding invoices (No-show policy and outstanding conference invoice details for discussion.docx) and the new policy document (conference invoicing policy.docx), which was produced based on the decisions that were made on this at the meeting. These will be circulated to the Executive with these minutes but are not for further circulation outside of the CAN Executive.

**ACTION: DCh and RL will look into ideas for questions and themes for a possible members survey.**

**ACTION: DCh and RL will look into feasibility of holding a Chairs Away Day in January 2015.**

**ACTION: DCh and RL to look into dates and locations for a possible two-day conference near the end of 2015 (which will be subject to sponsorship).**

**ACTION: All to look out for potential sponsorship opportunities.**

## **4. Representation, consultations and policy**

### **Engaging with the public health agenda**

4.1 This item was deferred until JKM arrived after lunch.

### **DECC's Big Energy Saving Network**

4.2 DCo usually attends these meetings but wasn't present to give an update.

4.3 DECC seem to be keen to push fuel switching.

4.4 Feedback from one project was that there was far too much paperwork for the amount of money awarded.

### **DECC Private Rented Sector working group**

4.5 CW went to the first meeting.

The National Trust and others have some strong views. The major landlords are saying they have asset management strategies, so it impossible to turn things around that quickly, so they are saying they shouldn't have to comply.

4.6 If tenants do improvement works there is nothing stopping the landlord putting the rent up. DECC don't seem interested in stopping this.

4.7 It was mentioned in the meeting that MoD properties are in poor condition – not insulated and MoD won't spend any money. This was originally ignored in the meeting notes.

4.8 The GLA were quite vocal.

4.9 With blocks of flat, there are consent issues with freeholder as well as landlords. Where a tenant makes a request for improvements and their landlord is a leaseholder, consent may be required from the freeholder depending on the measures to be installed and the provisions of the tenancy agreement. In order to ensure that such consents are not reasonably refused, the Government intends to extend the obligation not to reasonably refuse consent, to the superior landlord. Although a step in the right direction, it is unclear what would constitute an unreasonable refusal.

4.10 They were reassurances that there would be resources for LAs to enforce, but although they didn't say so, they gave the impression that there won't be any much, if any, funding for this. Private-sector housing is usually dealt with under environmental health departments in LAs although this has moved to shared services and elsewhere in some LAs – many jobs in this area have been cut. They talked about HHSRS enforcement as though it was easy to do, which it isn't.

4.11 It is good that HHSRS will take precedence, but it is worth noting that following enforcement action under the HHSRS the vast majority of properties will have been improved to an E or above.

4.12 The choice of banding is disappointing, as there is already a statutory duty on Council's to enforce improvements to properties with a known Category 1 excess cold hazard (generally found in F & G rated properties). This will add complication as there will be two different regulations. Council's hopefully will still look to enforce but will this be another hurdle?

4.13 If a landlord has a property they should look after it. If there is already legislation against F and G, but they are going to bring out a new list of exceptions in the new legislation, this is counterproductive.

4.14 E.g. in many LAs, sash windows have to be replaced "as is" on listed buildings. If remodelling, they have to replace just rotten pieces of window but still single glazed. They can pour concrete into floor cracks but can't insulate. If off-gas then they think it's ok if there is a solid fuel fire and won't put in wood burners.

4.15 It was pointed out that you can't rent an F or G property but they say there are ways round it. The difficulties with some listed properties are understandable but they are giving landlords a list of easy get-out clauses.

4.16 With climate change and fuel poverty targets there needs to be a trade-off, with people coming before buildings. Listed buildings might be beautiful but you have to be able to live in them.

4.17 Prestigious estates are often appalling but people are happy to live there because of the reputation they have.

4.18 There are many other types of properties which are not listed but they are still given landlords get out clauses. Why are there loopholes for these properties?

- 4.19 From 2018, when legislation comes in, will have until 2020 but, with the added five-year exemption period, this will be extended to 2025 before anything can be enforced.
- 4.20 Landlords say that upfront costs would mean many would have to stop renting properties or would have to sell. Existing empty properties tend to be where landlords have disappeared. They are not likely to leave them empty, as they claim they will.
- 4.21 Government have let fuel suppliers do what they like on ECO and they have also let landlords do what they like here.

#### **DECC Household Energy Efficiency Workshop – 2 September in London**

- 4.22 This was a productive event and actually felt like a true workshop. They were asked what they thought about the current system and what's working, what isn't and what can be improved. They have asked for feedback on the workshop and will try to fit everything in to current existing policy and then have a second workshop.

#### **National Insulation Association (NIA) Solid Wall Insulation Working Group Meeting**

- 4.23 PM could not reach the NIA's meetings, as they are held in Leyton Buzzard, so IF went instead. It was a good meeting and was held the day after three consultations had been released. It was agreed that the meeting would be held under Chatham rules to enable a free debate. There was a discussion on how to make the Green Deal Home Improvement Fund (HIF) work better, but this was closed the week after. There are incentives from HIF if you have just purchased a property, but why not have a similar incentive from HIF for those in FP.
- 4.24 There will be another workshop on 22 October, looking at data on SW properties, which IF will attend.
- 4.25 It was noted at the meeting that solid wall insulation (SWI) has not been delivered at scale to fuel poor homes as they often don't have the funding to contribute towards the cost of works and that the cuts to ECO will reduce the number of properties receiving SWI with potential negative effects on households in fuel poverty and industry.

#### **DECC's Off Gas Grid Meetings**

- 4.26 KL has been attending DECC's Off Gas Grid Meetings but wasn't able to attend the last one as they changed the date at the last minute. There will be another one in late November in London.
- 4.27 So far, these meetings have looking at what data has already been captured and how this can be melded together and shared. They are making progress but what about those off-gas properties that will never be connected. They are also looking at what the difference is between Priority Service Register (PSR) for off-gas properties. Park homes aren't on PSR because they don't have individual meters. They will be looking at the LPG agenda for social housing at November's meeting. "In the field" it is different to how DECC see it. People in off-gas properties pay for ECO but will never get a benefit from it. Looking at renewables as an alternative to gas works well in these properties.
- 4.28 Off-gas properties were mentioned in FPAG's response to DECC's Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation, which was good.
- 4.29 It would be useful to have someone in London to cover these meetings if KL can't attend, even if they don't have as much specialist knowledge.
- 4.30 NEA usually attends and William Barker has some good views. He used to represent Consumer Futures, which no longer exists and is now a part of the Citizens' Advice Bureau, and is now representing his own views and wrote the EFPC manifesto. Some people have strong views but not so good in the real world, e.g. an oil boiler is double the price of a gas boiler, but we are always being told they are the same price.
- 4.31 KL will try to attend November's meeting.

#### **NIA Conference in Leicester.**

- 4.32 No chairs have volunteered so DC and RL will attend.

#### **DECC Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation**

- 4.33 CAN has submitted a response to this. Lots of LAs have also responded. There are many shared views.
- 4.34 Colin Anderson has provided notes from the Chairs' Away Day.
- 4.35 The majority of the fuel poor live in solid wall properties, but there isn't an indicator for solid wall properties. DECC might develop this in future.

## Other Consultations

- 4.36 CAN submitted letters of support for London HECA's responses to DECC's Private Rented Sector and Ofgem's Priority Services Register Consultations.
- 4.37 CAN did not have the resources to respond to Ofgem's ECO consultation.
- 4.38 CAN has also supported the London consultation response to the NICE guidance on excess winter deaths and illnesses.

## 5. Regional updates

### 5.1 East Pennine CAN (Update given by PM at the meeting)

The next EP CAN meeting will be held jointly with NEA on 6 November. This is a later date than originally planned, as NEA asked them to wait until then as they had funding for the meeting. They have invited E.ON to do Smart Meter workshop as British Gas have already done theirs. They might also ask others. Things have been a bit quiet recently. Many officers feel they can't do a lot at the moment.

### 5.2 East Midlands CAN (Update given by KL at the meeting)

The last meeting was a full-day event on 4 September. The morning speakers were Sue Blamire, who works for the Citizens' Advice Bureau but presented on the Turn2Us service, which is a useful tool to help people claim benefits they are entitled to. Richard Murrell from Western Power talked on initiatives on fuel poor, and their Priority Services Register. He made the point that the distributor would like to know about people even if they have already signed up with their supplier. Ofgem were invited to the afternoon session but they couldn't attend. However, they sent presentation slides the day before, which KL went through. The rest of the afternoon was a workshop on the Fuel Poverty Strategy Consultation to use for EM CAN's response. This was facilitated by Peter Chisnall. EM CAN is still looking for sponsorship and will be speaking with a few potentials soon. Had over 20 people attend and all stayed after lunch. Private sector reps listened well to LA views. We are down on numbers compared to years ago because many posts no longer exist, but those who are there are very active. The forum is becoming more member-led, which is good. The next meeting will be on 4 December - no venue or speakers have been confirmed yet. There is currently no Secretary, however DC and KL are covering these duties.

### 5.3 London HECA (Update sent by IF prior to the meeting)

#### Details of any meetings held and/or forthcoming:

5 June 2014 - Summer Forum and AGM

- London Private Rented Sector Research Project Findings - Rebecca Jones NEA
- Energy is a challenging market environment, but there is a way - James Byrne, Sustainable Homes Survey Company (SHS)
- Collective Energy Switching - Adam Parvez, iChoosr
- RE:NEW Support Team Update - Koré Mason, GLA

12 September 2014 - Autumn Forum

- Focus on recent and current consultations (updates/discussions re consultation responses)
- Presentation on FP strategy consultation followed by Q&A - Rita Wadey, Head of Fuel Poverty Strategy, DECC
- ECO update from BG, Scottish Power

Other relevant meetings held in London/attended as London HECA Forum chair:

18 June 2014 – NICE Guidance event

14 July 2014 - End Fuel Poverty Coalition meeting

23 July 2014 - NIA Tackling Fuel Poverty in Solid Wall Properties in Private Housing

6 & 19 August 2014 - Domestic PRS Regulations Consultation Event (19 August meeting attended by JKM)

27 August 2014 - RE:NEW Procurement Framework

2 September 2014 - DECC Household Energy and Efficiency Workshop

9 September 2014 - The End Fuel Poverty Coalition manifesto launch

9 September 2014 - Debating the new fuel poverty strategy and targets All Party Parliamentary Fuel Poverty and Energy Efficiency Group members meeting

2 September 2014 DECC Household Energy and Efficiency Workshop

Forthcoming meetings:

22 October 2014 - NIA Solid Wall External Stakeholder Advisory Forum

Date tbc - Christmas Forum, joint meeting planned with LBEG potentially to include presentation from CLG on Zero Carbon and Allowable Solutions.

#### **Details of any current projects:**

**Borough updates** - Please find attached London HECA Forum meeting minutes (yet to be formally signed off by members) which contains borough activity updates.

**RE:NEW** - The next three year (phase 3) of RE:NEW, is funded by the European Investment Bank and the GLA and is to be delivered by Capita, who will offer about 12 days of free consultancy to qualifying organisations. This can be used for opportunities analysis (e.g. using EPC data), strategy development, or technical, procurement or marketing advice. Capita are also developing a 'community of practice' where users will be able to access information, updates, briefings, etc and share learnings. The GLA is currently working on a new procurement framework for RE:NEW (the existing framework expired in September 2014). The new framework will be in place in April/May 2015. Further information can be found at

<https://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/environment/tackling-climate-change/energy-efficiency/re-new-home-energy-efficiency/about-renew>.

#### **Any other comments, e.g. issues or barriers:**

Barriers around hard to treat properties (flats, solid wall properties, conservation area properties) continues to be a major issue for London, which continues to receive limited national funding. We will continue to lobby around these issues.

#### **5.4 London HECA (Update given by IF at the meeting)**

The meeting in September was consultation focused: PSR, PRS NICE and FP, updating on what responses had submitted. There were presentations from DECC on the FP strategy, ECO updates and an abseiling company offering fully-funded CWI as well as an update from Capita.

The GLA have a scheme called RE:NEW in its third tranche with funding to support boroughs to deliver capital measures. The procurement framework ended in sept and they will be looking to renew this to get a quicker route to market. The last framework was too focussed on small measures; the new one should be better for larger measures.

Five boroughs have joined up for GD communities funding, aiming for 12,000 solid-wall installations by March 2015, which is ambitious. Hillingdon had a good model last year, which stopped with the funding. This focussed on community engagement, talking to people. They did a few houses in every street and then it took off. People were willing to put 1-2,000 towards costs. Even lower income households could find that sort of money when they could see the benefits to neighbours. They are looking to set up an offset fund for Solid Wall Insulation. There is not much funding in the current landscape. People are worried that they will be offering something they won't have the funding to deliver.

Westminster talked about flats and leasehold law, which doesn't cater for improvements. They can do recharges for repairs but not for cavity wall insulation and other EE improvements. They are hoping to hold a stakeholder forum around March on this. This is an issue that particularly affects London but also has effects in other areas elsewhere too. Hopefully DECC will look at leasehold law.

It was asked if there had been any resources from Health and Wellbeing Boards? There has been a little bit in one or two boroughs, but most are finding it hard. Boards seem to be still trying to work out what their role is.

The Islington Mandated Referral Scheme for Warm Home Discount is a really good scheme. There could be scope to replicate this elsewhere. They have had about 900 signups with agreement to do bulk referrals. It's not certain if there would be an appetite from the big 6 to do the same in other boroughs as it is very resource intensive over the phone.

#### **5.5 South East CAN (Update given by CW at the meeting)**

The last SE CAN meeting was in June in Slough. There was a workshop at SSE's Eco-Home show home. There is hardly any heating in the show home, which is quite interesting.

CW will send speaker details.

There is heavy involvement with the Green Deal communities' fund.

The next meeting has been postponed until 31 October, due to strike action. The South East Account Manager from DECC will be attending, plus two providers presenting, with a DECC Q & A and best practices and lessons learnt.

SSE providers for solar Green Deal has taken five months but was signed last Friday, which allowed engagement with targeted areas. There was a Gosport Community Engagements event on Tuesday. Out of 100 people who attended, 65 signed there and then. There is £5,000 between SSE ECO and GD funds. 80% signed up to GD plans, which was surprising. DECC were quite pleased. There will be another event next Wednesday. There were not as many solid walls as some thought, so street-by-street approach hasn't worked as well as some predicted. They now have to try to do Cavity Wall and loft Insulation, which has already been largely done.

SE CAN has SSE, Scottish power and SGN as sponsors.

#### **5.6 HECA East (Update given by PH at the meeting)**

The last meeting was on 17 June, which focussed on vulnerable households' energy supply and extreme weather. There was a presentation from the British Red Cross Head of Emergency Planning about what happens on the ground when things go wrong. The event was very useful for a lot of people. Good community engagement is important. The workshop afterwards was usefully. HECA East now shares the second half of its meetings with the NEA.

The next meeting will be on 3 December, which is also the AGM. HECA East are now looking for sponsorship. Sustainability East were providing the secretariat but funding is now needed.

PH asked about a contact at DECC for HECA update. Steve Ives covers HECA and Rita Wadey covers FP. Dora Slater was a good speaker from DECC as she was refreshing and was able to answer most questions.

## **6. General Discussion Points**

- 6.1 The NICE guidance on excess winter deaths and illnesses consultation received one of the biggest response rates ever, although a few were off-topic. The draft guidance is being amended accordingly, although JKM couldn't say anything on this. The final version of the guidance will be released in March. NICE are encouraged by the response. Were some things they hadn't considered, but the guidance probably won't change substantially. The core element in the Housing Health Referral Service will remain, so could start using that. It is expected that every Health and Wellbeing Board will be doing this. Simon Roberts and JKM are on a group looking for results of best practice. JKM will also be involved on implementation and communication and will report back to the committee.
- 6.2 John Middleton has been commissioned to do a review of home renewables, energy efficiency and health policy, which could be useful.
- 6.3 GENTOO have published some conclusions, although they might be a bit ambitious as they are based on only six houses. This is a three-year programme and could change dramatically.
- 6.4 NIHR have started some projects about impacts of fuel poverty and winter fuel payments. Details are on the NIHR website. These are long-term projects 30 years away from reporting.
- 6.5 Rutland Council are doing similar projects in as best practise example in consultation.
- 6.6 Islington have put in a bid under the provisions Care and Repair funding. Not many LAs have been awarded funding but it could be worth others bidding for it.
- 6.7 At this year's NEA Conference, there was a lot about the new Fuel Poverty Strategy. Everyone seems disappointed with it. JKM was speaking and was quite blunt, pointing out that the last strategy failed. The "reasonably practicable" caveat doesn't go far enough without resources. There were about a dozen LAs there, mainly from Yorkshire. The LA bursaries last year were good but they didn't repeat that this year although they are looking at it again for next year. The conference might be in the South next year.
- 6.8 It could be worth inviting NEA to a future Executive meeting.

- 6.9 Two meetings in January could be a problem. Maybe look at different venue.
- 6.10 Northern Power have run workshops on their Priority Services Register on a similar topic to Western Power's presentation at the EM CAN meeting.
- 6.11 HECA reports are due in March. Steve Ives will be doing talks etc on this.  
From the last HECA reporting round it seems you can say whatever you like in your report and there is no comeback. People will probably submit almost the same thing as last time. Not much has happened since the first HECA reports as the "rug has been pulled".
- 6.12 The communities fund missed all the good weather for external wall insulation.  
One LA has pulled out and given DECC the money back. DECC are keen to avoid this.  
There probably won't be penalties.  
The money could be much better spent elsewhere, if they just said "do what you want with the money".
- 6.13 It was asked whether you can you spend a Green Deal Home Improvement Fund voucher on a property if there is no one in it? It was thought that you would need an occupancy assessment, so probably not.
- 6.14 Exemptions to the energy efficiency regulations for private landlords makes a mockery of whole thing. National Trust are also campaigning for exemptions for listed buildings.
- 6.15 In Rotherham Council, energy is in tier three and has been left alone. In Islington energy is under Highways. Some are in property services, and some in planning.
- 6.16 Energy officers are protecting themselves if they keep their profiles up. Those who try the opposite tactic are likely to get cut.
- 6.17 More needs to be done for park home properties. A lot of Londoners downsize to park homes, run out of money and end up living in cold homes in old age.
- 6.18 One London borough might be starting up an energy company using energy from waste plants.

## **7. AOB and Date of Next Meeting**

- 7.1 There was no other business.
- 7.2 The next meeting will be held on 15 January 2014 at Camden Town Hall, London.