

IAS-STS conference abstract

Rose Chard, PhD candidate

Lancaster Environment Centre

Lancaster University

Bailrigg

LA1 4YD

r.chard1@lancaster.ac.uk

07989783827

For the Special Session on Energy Poverty Exploring the role of localism in fuel poverty policy

Energy poverty is the product of low household income, poor energy efficiency of the home and fuel prices and hence can be inherently thought of as a socio-technical configuration. The rising number of homes suffering from energy poverty is creating new challenges for society and policy across Europe. There has been a recent shift towards schemes that adopt a local, community-based approach to addressing energy poverty which typically involves multiple public, private and third sector actors. Local organisations may be well positioned to assess the depth and dynamics of fuel poverty because they have access to data and resources on the distinctive characteristics of the local area and the vulnerability of the local energy poor. However, how well local fuel poverty initiatives are able to address the problem is not clear. The UK Energy Act 2011 brings in a number of new policies, such as Green Deal and Energy Company Obligations, which have energy poverty related objectives and require the involvement of local organisations, especially for delivery. This paper will explore how and why government policy advocates and rationalises the virtues of tackling energy poverty at a local scale in the context of wider moves towards a localism agenda. Tensions between roles, responsibilities and resources of key actors will be considered.